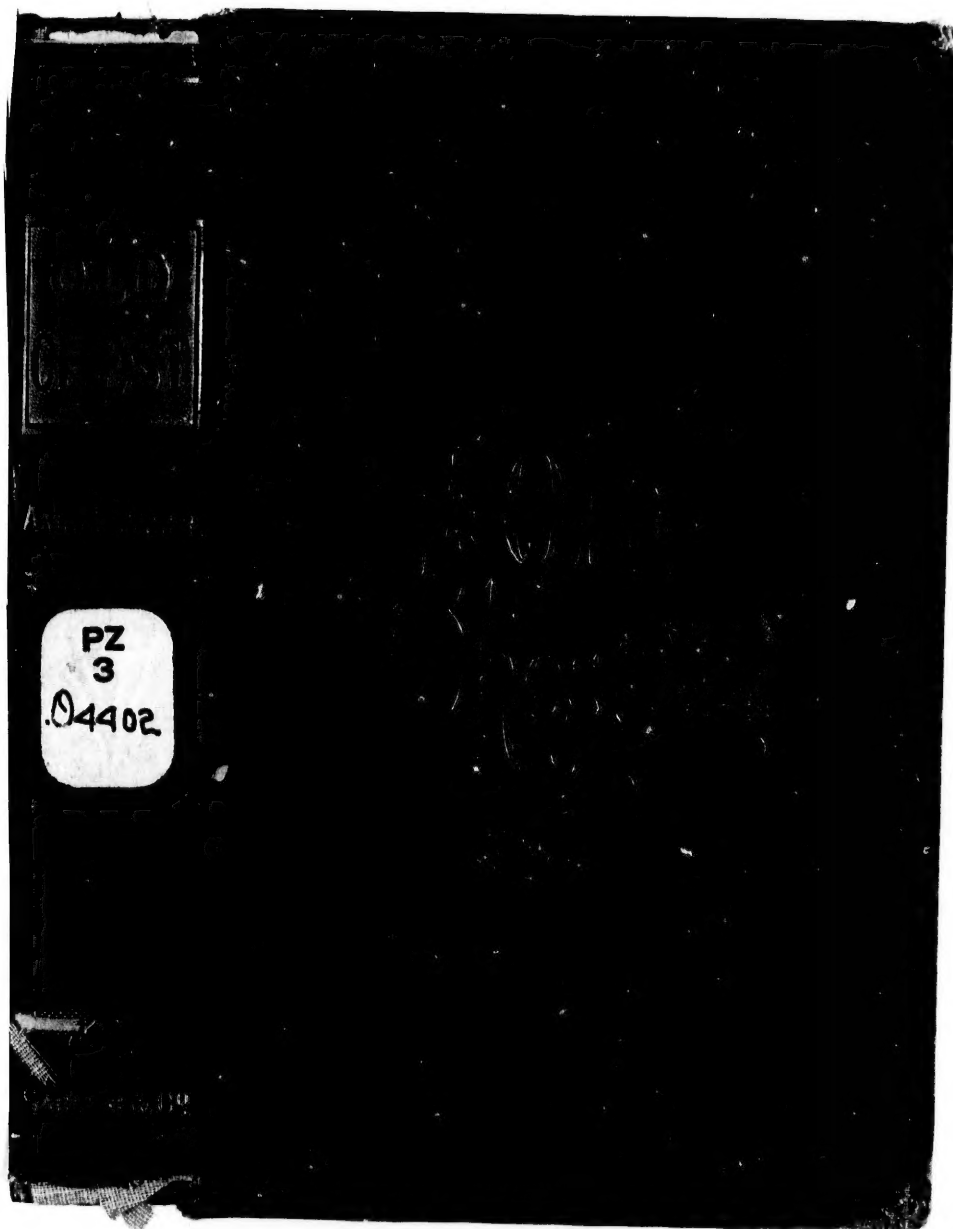


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THE
OLD CHEST;

OR, THE

JOURNAL OF A FAMILY OF THE FRENCH PEOPLE,

FROM THE

Merovingian Times to our Own Days.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

BY ANNA T. SADLIER.

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST AMERICAN
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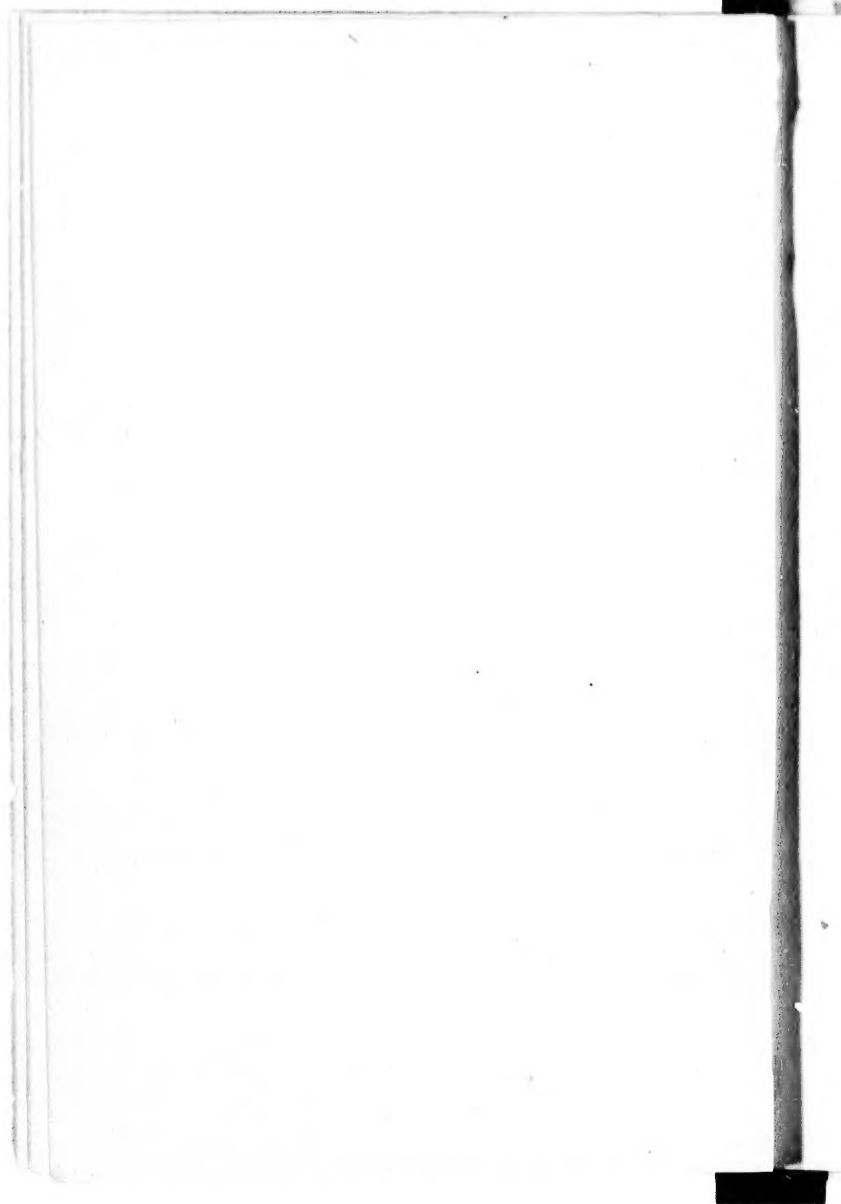
THE little work now for the first time published in the English language is something more than a story; it is a series of historical sketches, in the form of a family chronicle, following the course of French history from the early days of the first, or Merovingian dynasty, to the reign of Napoleon I.

The plan of the work, although simple, is ingenious and artistic, showing both learning and ability on the part of the author. In the brief sketch given of each succeeding representative of the Duchaisne family, the manners and customs of that particular age in which he

lived are skilfully introduced, as it were, in a bird's-eye view, and the leading event or events of the respective periods graphically described and interwoven with the thread of the narrative.

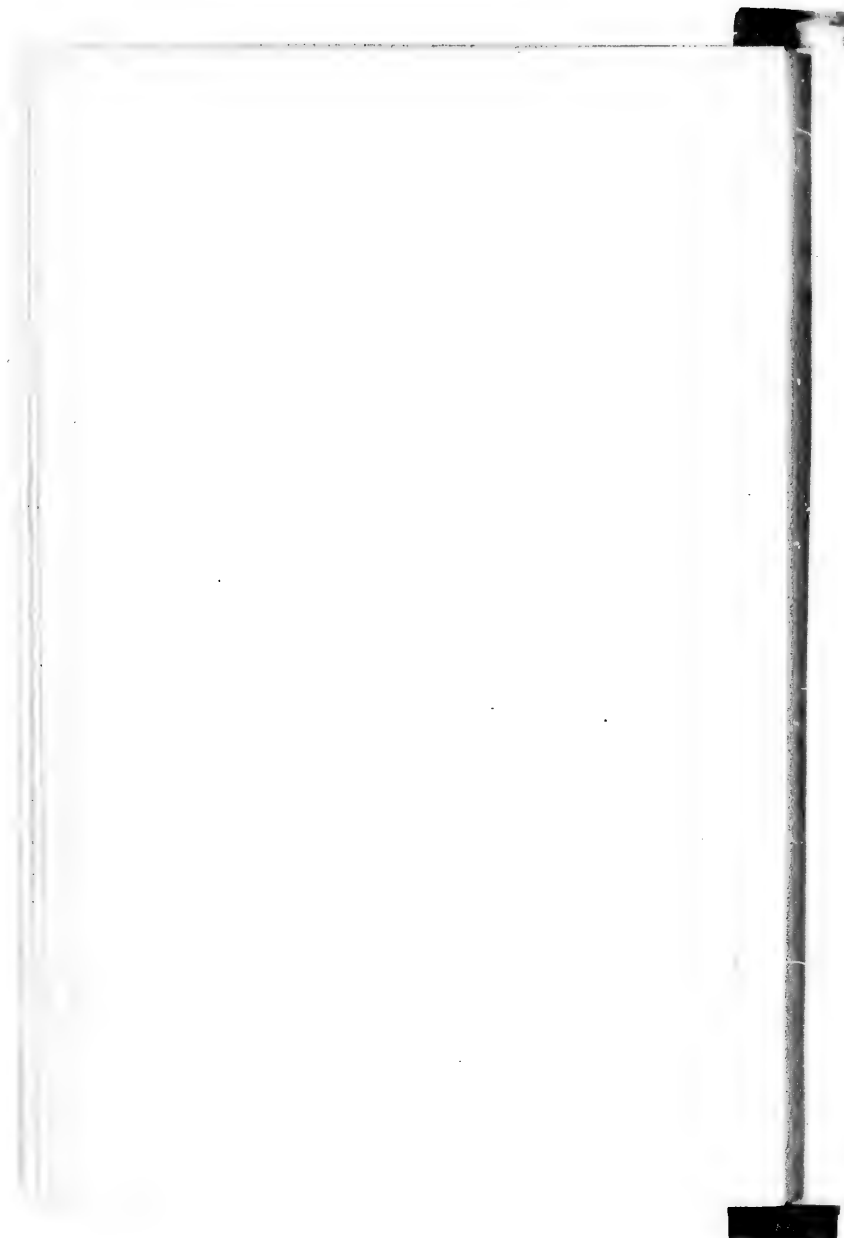
Such works as this, written, as it evidently is, by a devout Catholic, are calculated to benefit the youthful reader by cultivating a taste for historical reading, and at the same time conveying to the mind a certain amount of accurate historical information. In this little work we have a photographic view, so to say, of the ages as they passed over the fair land of France, their chief characteristics made real and very striking to the youthful reader. We have the ancient Gauls, the Frankish soldiers of Charlemagne, the monk in his cloister, the itinerant church-builder and his pious craft, the soldier of Crécy, the Troubadour, the treasury-clerk in the time

of Colbert, the renegade follower of Coligni and his pious and faithful Catholic brother, the philosopher-banker of the eighteenth century, the brave soldier of the Grand Army, and still other representative types of classes faithfully depicted by a graphic pen guided by the spirit of faith. It is, however, a very unpretending volume, and as such we hope it may find favor in the eyes of young and old.



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THE OLD CHEST.

INTRODUCTION.

IN 18— I was staying in the suburbs of a town in the north of France, where my neighbor was an old gardener in humble circumstances, whose name was Pierre Duchaisne. My window overlooked his little garden, which, symmetrically divided into three parts, was arranged in beds of hyacinths, tulips, pinks, roses, fuchsias, dahlias, and chrysanthemums. Some rare flowers were protected from the wind by bell-shaped glass covers, which attracted the heat of the sun. Peach-trees, vines, and a fig-tree covered the walls of the little house where the old man lived alone, on the modest income which his flowers brought him every week when he took them to the city.

I took an interest in old Pierre's labors, his seclusion, and poverty; for the good man's appearance denoted that his labor alone kept him from indigence—indigence which was proud and resigned, but bitter and real.

No one helped him in his work; being an old soldier, he had not married; and old age had come, and he had not the strong arm of a son or

the skilful hand of a gentle and pious daughter to serve him. I vainly sought to render him some of those services which bind people's hearts to each other : the old man was proud—I should have said stoically proud, if he had not always shown himself a good and fervent Catholic.

One day, however—it was a scorching morning in June—I did not see him wandering around his garden, with his watering-pot in his hand. I looked at the house ; the door and the shutters were closed, and the dog, lying in his corner, was howling mournfully. Feeling uneasy, I went over the hedge, and opened the inner door, which was only on the latch, and found Pierre, half-dressed, lying on his bed, as though he were dead. I ran to him, and raised him. I saw that hæmorrhage of the lungs had reduced him to the last degree of weakness and exhaustion. He recognized me, and pressed my hand. I did all in my power for him, and soon the physician and the parish-priest brought him, one the impotent remedies of his profession, and the other the powerful consolations of his ministry. Old Pierre lived three days after this ; during that time I never left him, and he seemed touched by my readiness to console and serve him.

About evening on the third day he called me, and said, in a broken voice, “I feel that I am going. . . . All is over with me, good neighbor. . . . In less than two hours from now, perhaps, I shall tell the good God of your kindness to me. I would wish to leave you something ; but I have nothing. Yet, stay ; you see that old chest ? . . . It contains some papers which belonged to

my father, and which had been left to him by his father. . . . It is an old family relic ; but a learned man, to whom I showed it once, told me that it was a curiosity. . . . Would you like to have it, my dear neighbor ? It is yours ; I give it to you. . . . Take also my poor dog, 'Tetu' : she will not know where to go, poor animal. Good-by, my dear sir ; pray for me. . . . Who would have said that an old pioneer of General Eblé would die in his bed ? . . ."

He fell back on his pillow ; his eyes became fixed ; his hands groped about on the quilt ; . . . the priest came in just then, and held the crucifix before him. . . . Pierre kissed it fervently, and all was over.

After having followed the humble hearse of the old soldier-gardener, I took possession of the legacy which his friendship had left me. I took home Tetu, who never stopped howling and snuffing the spade, the pruning-knife, the watering-pot, and all the implements which had been used by her poor master. Before opening the box I examined it. It was a curious chest, covered with carving, representing the celebrated women of the Bible, amid a foliage of flowers and fruits ; dust and moths were silently consuming that domestic monument of another age. I opened with some difficulty the lid, which was swollen by damp, and I took out an enormous bundle of papers and parchments—old Pierre's legacy.

On going home, I examined the manuscripts. The oldest of them were in a beautiful running hand of the Merovingian times, and dated from the Abbey of Elnon, now called Saint Amand. They

had been written in his leisure moments by a pious monk, and continued by his descendants. This family tradition extended through several centuries down to our old soldier, who had himself, in an uncertain hand, traced his recollections of Moscow. In a word, I had before my eyes the complete history of an humble family, who, though always obscure, had yet been connected with the important events of their several epochs, forming one phase of those great oceans of men, one of the voices of those immense multitudes, one of the wheels of those powerful levers, which change and overturn the face of the world. I have made some extracts from this family journal, continued during so many ages, and it is these pages which I now present to the reader.

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NOTES OF SERGIUS,

MONK OF ELNON.

I would here record what I have learned at my parents' fireside of the history of my ancestors, and particularly of their conversion to the faith of Christ. I desire that these pages, transmitted to my descendants, may teach them fidelity to the Lord, who deigned to draw them from the bosom of barbarism and bring them within the pale of the Catholic Church. Our Lady and St. Benedict assist me in my work, and may those who read these pages pray for me, a miserable sinner !



I.

THE FRANKISH SOLDIER—FIFTH CENTURY.

CLODION, Chief or King of the Salian tribe, cherished the desire of penetrating into Gaul, where the Frankish tribes had already made various settlements. Encamped on the banks of the Rhine, in the thick and gloomy forests of Belgium, or among the swamps of Batavia, he enquired with eager curiosity of that beautiful country where, over the fertile fields, extended like a network, the broad Roman roads, connecting one with the other important towns, defended by large ramparts and crenelated towers. He was told of the riches contained in the houses of the wealthy Gauls, or Gallo-Romans, who had brought the luxury and the gorgeous wealth of Italy to the banks of the Seine and Loire. These accounts, which caused explorers to be sent every year from beyond the Rhine, excited the covetousness of the long-haired King; he transmitted it to his companions, and all formed the project of advancing into Gaul, and avenging the injuries which they had received from the Roman armies. They incited each other by bitter taunts, by fierce defiance, and thus whetted their swords and their hearts. The assembled army, under the command of Clodion, crossed the charcoal forest, near Tournay, and marched towards the city of Cambrai.

The peaceful inhabitants saw with terror this horde of barbarians, whose very aspect was frightful. Of tall and robust stature, they fastened their tawny hair over their foreheads, and let it fall down their backs, like a horse's tail. They had no other clothing nor armor than a long linen garment, fitting close to their bodies; from their girdle hung a large sword, and they held in their hand either an axe, which from them was called Frankish, or a pike curved like a fish-hook. All these men were passionately fond of war; in the midst of battle, wounded, mutilated, they remained standing, apparently insensible to pain, and using their last strength to deal their enemy a final blow.

Who can tell the fear, the inexpressible anguish of the faithful friends of Jesus Christ, when they saw that horde of pagans descending, furious and implacable, on that country recently conquered to the dominion of the Good Shepherd? The Christians fled before them, and took refuge in gloomy caverns, there to assist at the holy mysteries. When the barbarians succeeded in finding any of them, they lashed them with whips or slew them with their swords. The greater number, who had hidden in subterranean passages, perished there from suffocation. Hence there were no more priests, no more sacrifices: the traces of the divine worship everywhere disappeared. Some were cast down from the top of tottering ruins, others were consumed by flames. Some, however, survived and persevered, strengthening each other by mutual exhortations, so as not to fail at the final moment. In overcoming nature in obedience to religion, it was sweet for them to think

that at least they should find a grave in the bosom of their country. "Why should we wish," cried they, "to survive our holy religion? Is it not better for us to die with her?" Whoever from fear abandoned his faith was held as sacrilegious. He who had the courage to accomplish the sacrifice was proclaimed a victor and a conqueror. Priests clad in their vestments were seen falling at the foot of the altar; and, among the corpses scattered here and there on the ground, they were recognized by their sacerdotal ornaments. But this impious fury was not directed against the priests alone: the whole people were condemned to slaughter. The law of God and that of humanity were at once violated. . . . The blood spilled in the churches remained there stagnant. No one came to remove the dead and give them burial. Land of Gaul, thou didst thus expiate thy former ferocity.*

Among these fierce pagans was a soldier, of obscure origin, but valiant and worthy of the name of Frank, which means proud, brave, fierce. Gunther, this was his name, had taken an active part in all the contests between the Franks and the Roman legions; and, entering with his companions the town of Cambray, he expected to obtain a large booty. They advanced towards a chapel, dedicated to the Saviour, where, it was said, the piety of the Christians had collected precious vessels, tissues of silk and gold, destined to envelop the bodies of the saints. Gunther, being first, forced the door, which, coming off the hinges, presented to the cruel eyes of the victors a pitiable spectacle.

* This passage is to be found in the Chronicle of Balderic.

Women and old men, who filled the chapel, were prostrate on the stones, which they watered with their tears. The white-haired priest was at the altar, kneeling before the silver tabernacle, which contained the body and blood of the Saviour. He was repeating aloud, in the name of that desolate people, the Penitential Psalms. When Gunther entered, the people rose tumultuously, the terrified women screamed, the men tried to oppose the young soldier with their feeble arms. Gunther raised the terrible axe, two women and an old man rolled, bloody corpses, at his feet; he passed over their bodies, and walked towards the altar, attracted by the silver which glittered in the sunlight.

The priest clasped the tabernacle, and sought to make for it a rampart of his body. . . . But all in vain. . . . As a holocaust victim, his blood stained the altar-stone. When the work of blood and pillage was ended, Gunther looked around him. In the shade of a pillar he saw a young girl who had escaped the sword, and who, pale with fear, with closed eyes and hands clasped, seemed to await the fatal blow. Gunther ran towards her, and, seizing her by her long fair hair, he dragged her to the middle of the chapel, crying out :

"This is my part of the booty !"

"Be it so," said the other soldiers.

But the captive, throwing herself at his feet, said, in a tone of anguish :

"Would to God that I were amongst the dead, like my mother, my father, and my brother, whom thou hast just slain !"

And she pointed with her hand to the corpses of those whom Gunther had struck down.

"Fear nothing, woman," answered Gunther coldly, "thy fate shall be less harsh than thou thinkest. I will sell thee as servant to the wife of Clodion, our chief, and thou wilt spin her wool and flax."

So saying, he led his slave to a house whose owners he had driven away; but, as they were about to enter, they were met by a woman, who was venerable at once from her old age, her white hair, and grave and austere face.

This matron bravely advanced, and, pushing Gunther aside, she took in her arms the young captive, who clung to her like the ivy which twines its delicate stems around the tree which serves for its support.

"Let go my slave!" cried Gunther. "She belongs to me by the right of war. I chose her as my part of the booty. Let her go, I tell thee! I want to sell her to Ingonde, the wife of our king."

"Thou wouldst sell her!" replied the old woman sorrowfully. "Sell my Ida, the daughter of my daughter, the daughter of martyrs! Sell a Christian maiden to a barbarous queen! Well, man, I can buy her from thee. I will give thee whatever thou and thine have left me—some jewels, a farm on the banks of the Escout, a herd of oxen—I will give all for my daughter's freedom. Accept, Sicamber, accept my offer, and a mother's blessing will fall on thee everywhere."

The Frankish soldier reflected. Wealth and property were offered to him, who had been hitherto poor, and possessed nothing but his soldier's coat. He did not hesitate about accepting it, but

he wished, at the same time, to secure to himself irrevocably the possession of these goods. Therefore he answered coldly, "I refuse, and I keep my slave."

"What, then, wouldst thou have?" cried Ragonde tearfully. "Wouldst thou have my freedom? I will be thy slave—I will serve thee; but let Ida be free."

"That cannot be," said Gunther. "I wish thy daughter to stay with me, for I would marry her."

"Thou!—a soldier! Is it possible? Can I sanction the alliance of Christ with Belial? No, never!"

"Choose! If thou dost refuse, I will sell Ida to Clodion, my master; I will take possession of thy goods, and thou thyself shalt be my slave. If thou dost accept my offer, I will at once marry Ida according to the manner of the Franks, and I will be a faithful husband to her, for she pleases me."

Ragonde besought him in vain. She could obtain nothing, and her grandchild was forced to obey the will of the victor. Ida only obtained by her tears that the blessing of a priest should sanctify their marriage, in which the bride swore fidelity to her husband before Christ, and the bridegroom took as witness the idols dear to the Teutons.

It was thus that Gunther, the Frankish soldier, planted in Gau the foundation of his family, by taking a wife and capturing lands.

After some years Ida gave birth to a son, and she herself, like Rachel of old at the birth of her dear Benjamin, was brought to the verge of the grave. In presence of her grandmother, Ragonde,

she took her child in her arms, and said, in a dying voice, "Lord God Almighty, my prayers have not obtained that the husband whom thou didst choose for me has embraced thy law; but here is the child whom I asked of thee with so many tears. I give him to thee, I consecrate him to thee. Lord, let him be a Christian, and let him not belie the sacred character which I am about to imprint on him by holy baptism."

And the poor mother poured the holy water on the forehead of the new-born child. This was the last act of her life. She died next day, mourned alike by her pagan husband and her Christian grandmother.

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II.

THE CONVERSION—SIXTH CENTURY.

GONTRAN, the son of Ida and Gunther, although having received at his birth the seal of baptism, was not brought up a Christian. His grandmother, Ragonde, had died before he had come to the age of reason, and he was educated by his father in the cruel and dissolute customs of paganism. Like all young men of the Frankish race, he rendered military service; he fought in the war against the Burgundians and the Goths in Spain, and, like all his companions, he took part in the sacrilegious festivals and impure worship offered to the gods of Germany. He believed in fate, in magic, and sometimes, to render his gods favorable, he went to offer sacrifice on the hill of Blandin,* where Teutates had a celebrated temple. O the mercy of the Lord! On that same hill where the devil was worshipped our blessed Father Saint Amand consecrated a monastery to the glory of Jesus Christ. That place, once abominable, is henceforth sanctified. I, Sergius, who write these lines, have seen that house of prayer, and blessed the name of God.

Now, one day—Clovis, the illustrious king of the Franks, was then reigning—one day, as Gontran was going from Cambrai to his little farm, he saw

* Near Gand.

on the road an old man, who, from his long tunic and the cross which hung on his breast, he recognized as a Christian priest. It was, in fact, the pious Berthold, the companion and brother of Védastus, Bishop of Arras and Cambrai. The priest went, as the Apostles did of old, from town to town, bringing the good tidings, and preaching, at the peril of his life, the lessons of his Divine Master. Perhaps Gontran knew him; it may be that he had before met the ambassador of Jesus Christ. However it was, at the sight of the holy old man the idolater's blood boiled, and, urged by the spirit of murder, he ran forward, raised his axe, and dealt Berthold a blow on the forehead. He staggered back wounded, but, overcoming the pain, he wiped away the blood which was running down his pale face, and said to Gontran in a calm and gentle voice:

"My son, what have I done to thee? Why dost thou strike me?"

"Because thou art the enemy of my gods, and consequently my enemy."

"Thy enemy!—I, my son? Divine Goodness forbid! Undeceive thyself. Receive my pardon; and henceforth remember that a soldier should not strike an old man."

So saying, Berthold went his way, although with difficulty. Gontran took another road, and walked on pensively. He afterwards confessed that, in going away from the old priest without throwing himself at his feet and asking his pardon, he resisted a holy voice which spoke in his soul—he obeyed the ancient enemy, who incites to pride those whom humility alone could save.

Two days after this, Gontran was riding along the banks of the Escaut, the muddy waters of which, swollen by heavy rains, rushed along like a torrent. On the other bank was a farm, where laborers were threshing wheat on the barn-yard floor. The horse, frightened by the noise of the flail, began to plunge, and, obeying neither bridle nor spur, threw off his master, who rolled senseless into the water. When he came to life, he found himself lying on a bed of fleecy wool; a man bending over him was watching anxiously for his first breath and his first look. Gontran tried to rise. The man took him gently in his arms, and said to him kindly:

"Well, my son, how is it with thee?"

The sound of his voice drew Gontran from his stupor. His eyes opened, and, O the goodness of the Lord! the eyes of his soul were at the same time opened. He recognized the priest Berthold—Berthold whose wet garments showed that he had saved the life of his would-be murderer at the risk of his own—Berthold whose forehead still bore the mark of Gontran's axe.

"What! it is thou!" said the soldier—"thou!"

He dared not say more, and he turned his face to the wall to hide his tears.

It was indeed Berthold, who, through the mercy of the Lord, had saved the idolater as the water was about to swallow him up. The holy priest had been at the farm, where some of the laborers, still pagans, were preparing to receive the grace of baptism. He had come to instruct them, and from an upper room he had recognized Gontran, and had seen him disappear beneath the waves.

Consulting only his charity, he plunged into the river and brought Gontran unconscious to the shore.

For several days Gontran was cared for by the people of the farm. He received their attentions in silence, always absorbed in thought. At length about the dawn of the fifth day he rose and went to Berthold's room. The priest was kneeling, with hands raised to heaven; he seemed as if imploring mercy of the Lord. When he heard Gontran's steps behind him, he rose, held out his hand, and said gently:

"Welcome, my son. I was thinking of thee."

"And I, priest, have not ceased to think of thee for several days. Thou hast saved my life—I who would have taken thine. Thou didst that in the name of Christ, and I think that the God who makes thee so good is the true God. I want to believe in Christ: tell me what I must do."

"What! my child, my brother, thou wilt be ours? I will lead thee as a new sheep to the fold of the good Shepherd."

"Priest, if I believe what my grandmother told me in the early days of my childhood, I have already received on my head the water which makes Christians; she said my mother baptized me. There is at Cambrai a priest to whom Ragonde has often related this."

"God had merciful designs on thee; he does not grant to all the same grace. He does reveal to all his holy law!"

As he said these words, Berthold shed tears of joy. Gontran was looking at the crucifix.

"This, then," said he, "is the God whom I must henceforth adore?"

"Yes, my dear son, it is the image of the God who created thee, who died to secure for thee eternal life; this is the God of chaste, of meek and humble souls; to serve him worthily, we must have the simplicity of a child and the courage of a martyr."

"And what offerings does this God demand?"

"Thy heart, my son; none other. But we shall continue this conversation later; now, content thyself with saying often, from the depth of thy soul: 'True God, grant that I may know and love thee.'"

This prayer, which Gontran had on his lips till the last moment of his life, was undoubtedly efficacious; for only a very few months had elapsed before the idolater received the rite of baptism, the Eucharistic bread, and the sacrament which gives light and strength to the Christian. Then the old man died in him, and on his ruins arose the new man, brought forth by grace and docile to its inspirations. The new Christian was seen assiduous in the temples, faithful in prayer, visiting with fervent tears the tombs of the martyrs; now the mysterious crypt where Saint Piat received his death-blow from the hands of a Roman licitor, again the fountain near which Saint Chrysole was beheaded; or, following like a child the footsteps of Berthold, his father in the faith, he accompanied him in his apostolic wanderings through the countries of the Atretates, of the Nervians, and of the Ménapians, to whom the faithful priest sought to bring the mild light of the Gospel. Not daring to aspire to the sacerdotal honors, Gontran shared the perilous life of the missionary, going from city to city, from town to town, seeking, in the name of

his divine Master, a soul which he might ransom from slavery, and bring forth to the liberty of the children of God.

Lord, I am overwhelmed with gratitude and love, thinking of those saintly men whom thou hast sent to barbarians, to worshippers of the devil, in a word, to our ancestors, to bring them to thee, and secure to them peace and salvation. What did they not suffer, these men of whom the world was not worthy! Fatigue, toilsome and continual journeys through wild countries, hunger, thirst, the sacrifice of every good, the rending asunder of those ties dearest to the human heart, outrage, mockery, the distrust even of those whom they came to convert; at length, and but too often, tortures and death; such has been the lot of the ambassadors of the living God. O charity of a God which he has been pleased to communicate to his creatures! O charity of creatures who sought to make known to their brethren that God, so great and so good! my soul is lost in wonder, and I can only repeat, "God is admirable in his works! God is admirable in his saints!"

This life of danger and fatigue was that of Berthold, and Gontran shared it with faithful devotion. For ten years he followed him, as loving as a son, as submissive as a slave, bound to the missionary's lot by that indestructible chain which unites virtuous hearts, and which, broken on earth, will be more strongly renewed in heaven. Berthold was now very old; but he would not stop, his rest was elsewhere; and he repeated with Saint Paul, "*Woe to me if I convert not!*"

Urged by his zeal, he went to preach to the in-

habitants of a village situated on that hill which still bears the name of the ancient tribe of Cal-tians;* but these unhappy idolaters refused to hear him and chased him from the village with stones. Gontran could not defend his master as he was unarmed. Berthold wished for no other sword than words, no other violence than that of persuasion. They both fled, followed by the curses of a senseless people. Gontran supported the old man; but, after they had gone about a mile, Berthold said to him:

"Let us stop, my son, my strength fails me."

He sat down under an oak, on the moss which the winter had spared, and Gontran watched him in real alarm, for it seemed to him that Death had already set his seal on that pallid face and those trembling lips.

"Father," said he, "thou art suffering. . . ."

"A little, my son: the flesh grows weak. . . . I thirst!"

Gontran ran to a brook whose murmur was heard as it flowed through a thicket of holly, its water swollen by the November rains. He filled the gourd and brought it to Berthold. The latter sought to raise it to his lips; but he stopped.

"My thirst will soon be quenched, . . ." said he. "Gontran, my son, my race is run, I feel it. . . . Pray for me, and receive my blessing for all thy love and care. Mayest thou be blessed a thousand times! Now let us pray for those poor idolaters!" So saying, he began the Lord's Prayer, he repeated it several times, mingling with it ar-

* Near Cassel, in the Département du Nord.

dent supplications for the pagans. . . . At length his voice ceased. . . . Gontran, who was supporting him, looked at him in terror, . . . felt his motionless pulse, his icy heart. . . . The missionary was no more, and, faithful to the charity which had guided his life, even in dying, he thought not of himself.

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III.

THE MONK—SEVENTH CENTURY.

GONTRAN married a young Christian girl, and ended his days in peace and in works of piety. I, Sergius, am his grandson, and it was from himself that I learned the particulars of his conversion. He was won to Jesus Christ by all-potent charity, and entire tribes of savage pagans were conquered by the same arms. Now, this whole country is under the blessed yoke which the Saviour Jesus came to bring to the world; the Nervian forests are peopled with pious tribes, who practise labor and prayer in common, according to the laws of God and of Saint Benedict. May the God of mercy be ever blessed! Neither Jupiter nor Teutates now have altars in these regions, so long bowed down under the worship of false gods; the spirits of evil no longer haunt the cross-ways or the fountains. . . . Christ alone reigns. His is the empire! And, if the descendants of the Gauls still kneel under the oak, it is to venerate the blessed Mother of God, whom the shepherds place among the foliage. . . . If an altar be raised in wild and waste places, it has been sanctified by the blood of the great victim of Calvary. . . . Fly, fly, ye powerful enemies, gods of hell, who ruled over

ancestors, fly ! The Lion of the tribe of Juda has conquered.

I have not, like my fathers, any warlike adventures nor striking conversion to relate.

Born within the fold of the Saviour Jesus, I was nourished at my mother's knee with the milk of holy doctrine. I have been told that, when a little child, I was seized with an illness which threatened my life. . . . I was going to die. . . . My mother, my father, my grandmother, stood round my cradle, and watched for the signs of approaching death on my face. . . . The breath of this mortal life was trembling on my lips, when my mother threw herself on her knees before a crucifix, and cried : " Lord Jesus, who didst restore the son of a poor widow, save my child, and I give him to thee—I dedicate him to thy altar ! " *

My father and my grandmother confirmed this vow, and the Lord accepted it. The gates of heaven closed, a peaceful sleep came upon me, and knit again the bonds which bound me to earth ! . . . I lived, and when I had attained the age of seven years (it was the year of our Lord 646) my parents brought me to the monastery of Elnon, not far from the city of Tournay. A thick forest covered the place which the servant of God had humbly solicited from the charity of King Dagobert ; on a spot which had been cleared with much difficulty

* I even observe, in the rule of Saint Benedict, that they did not fear to consecrate children before they came to the age of reason ; the parents, without fear of tyrannizing over them, believed that they could dedicate themselves to God from their cradle. (Bossuet, " Sermons sur les Obligations de l'Etat religieux.")

was erected a large house, built of wood and covered with thatch ; a bell, hung on the top of the building, rang out the hours of prayer, and warned the religious, laborers, or shepherds afar off in the fields to raise their souls from earth and unite in spirit with their brethren prostrate before God. We were received at the door of the monastery by a monk, who saluted us and led us to the guest-chamber. After some moments' rest, we were conducted to the church, where the prior awaited us. My mother wept. I remember her tears ! My father took my hand and led me to the altar, where he made me kneel before the prior, saying, "I, Landóald, a free man, and Clothsinde, my wife, give and dedicate to God, Our Lady, and St. Benedict, through your hands, most reverend lord, our son, Sergius, the first-born of our marriage, that in this monastery of Elnon he may serve God in the religious profession, and, if it please his great mercy, in the sacerdotal ministry."

The prior answered kindly. He cut off a lock of my hair. I took off my little coat, I was clad in a gown and a black cowl, and from that moment I was an oblate of the monastery of Elnon.

The Lord, who had undoubtedly accepted my mother's vow, gave me inclinations conformable to my destiny, and he granted to my mother a happy fruitfulness which repaid her for her sacrifice.

Since my seventh year, I have never left this house, and I have become an unworthy religious of the Order of St. Benedict, and a still more unworthy member of the sacerdotal body. I have nothing to relate of myself ; my life has passed tranquil and obscure, leaving no trace amongst

men, nor in my own memory, where the days, each like the other, are lost in the uniform shades of the past. Through obedience I have taken part in the labors of my brethren, the courageous work of the laborers, the ceaseless toil of the writers, the apostolic labors of the missionaries, but I have always seen myself last of all in merit, in labor, and in virtue. Our blessed father has ordained that to prayer, meditation, the singing of hymns and of psalms, we add the culture of letters and the labor of our hands. Everywhere the sons of St. Benedict till the waste and barren lands, fertilize the moors, dry up impure swamps, and gather around their poor monasteries the dwellings of mechanics and of laborers, to whom the cross serves as a rallying-point and a refuge.

Who can fathom the designs of Providence? Perhaps these villages, built in the shadow of the cross, may become populous towns, and Gaul, like Italy, shall see smiling plains surmounted by the towers and battlements of her wealthy cities. We, too, cultivate these fields, so long neglected or devastated by war; harvests now wave where formerly arose a thick forest, the haunt of brigands and of wild beasts; cottages are hidden in the shade of our belfry, and we seek to give faith, light, and happiness to those who dwell near us. Other duties and other labors besides these occupy us; the Church, our mother, has kept the deposit of ancient letters, about to perish in the storm which the barbarous North let loose on the more favored and more brilliant countries of the South. She has kept, as a prudent parent keeps for her children, a fortune which she will one day restore

to them; and we, devoted to study and recollection, preserve for those who shall come after us the beautiful inspirations of the Holy Fathers and the learning of antiquity. We transcribe books which have escaped the ravages of time and of the barbarians; we also record, in our domestic annals, memorable facts in the lives of great servants of God, whose memory and example edify us. . . . The works of the saints should not be forgotten, and he who would not lose one of their bones should no more permit the memory of their virtues and of their miracles to perish amongst men.

Some among us write the history of the events which are taking place in that world in which we no longer live: the intrigues of courts, the revolutions of kingdoms, and the succession to thrones, so often disputed. Others teach theology, morals, the elements of science, to the young scholastics; and we all endeavor to keep burning the torch of human and divine knowledge, so roughly shaken in these days of wars and disasters. Others, in fine, more fortunate than laborers or men of learning, bear to the heathen the good tidings of salvation, cultivate that vast field in which reapers are filling ignorant and thirsty souls with the true science of truth and of life. God—may his name be blessed!—has granted me the grace sometimes to follow in his apostolic pilgrimages our blessed father and founder, Amand, and to be the unworthy witnesses of the virtues of the servant of God. I followed him, especially, along the banks of the Escant, amongst those fierce idolaters who inhabit Mount Blandin, and who, according to common opinion, owe their name to the Vandals. I will not relate the won-

ders of his preaching, nor the miracles with which it was honored, nor the sufferings which he endured so joyfully in the name of his only master, Jesus Christ ; I will merely, for those who come after us, narrate the conversion which led to all the others, and whose recollection still lives in our country. I am old now, but I love to recall the prodigies of mercy which I then witnessed. I repeat them to our young brethren, so that they may learn never to doubt of the goodness of the Lord.

Bavo, Count of Hasbania, was still plunged in the errors of paganism, and he inspired in his vassals, in his companions-in-arms, and in the chase, a profound terror, which was justified by the licentiousness of his morals and the harshness of his character. He was married to a Christian lady, and he had one child, an innocent little creature, whose prayer and purity were pleasing to the Most High. God cast an eye of mercy on the dwelling of Bavo, and he sent him the cross, which is always the messenger of his mercy. Bavo's wife died, and the heart of the fierce profligate was broken. I saw him then, that pagan on whom was poured forth the generous balm of the cross ; he came, urged by a mysterious power, to throw himself at the feet of Amand, whose name had gone forth through all the country, like the sweet scent of a ripe field which God has blessed. Amand dwelt in the monastery which he had founded and dedicated to the apostle Saint Peter, on Mount Blandin, and I was with him. I saw approaching a man of tall stature, of fierce and haughty countenance, contracted by overwhelming sorrow. He came hurriedly into the cell, and threw himself

at the feet of our blessed father, saying, in a broken voice, "I have sinned, I have offended the great God of heaven, by oppressing the weak and shedding innocent blood! Holy pontiff, give me wise counsel as to the salvation of my soul! I wish to purify and correct my life. I place myself in your hands, man of God. Have pity on me! Save me!"

Our holy father, overwhelmed with joy, could answer only by his tears; he clasped Bavo in his arms, and wept on his neck, like the father of the prodigal son, the sacred image of the Father of Mercy. He spoke to him the words of salvation and of life, which the pagan received respectfully; and from that day the man of iniquity died out, and gave place to the new man, who draws from Jesus Christ the sap of life. The lion of battles became a mild and gentle lamb; works of penance and of charity filled up his days; he wept for his own sins; he dried the tears of his brethren, and soon, as the divine grace, when it overcomes a heart, always tends to a more perfect state, Bavo solicited the clerical tonsure, and submitted to regular discipline, under the Abbot Florbert, and no one could have recognized in the austere penitent the fiery Count d'Hasbanie. His wonderful penance astonished and converted even those whom the words of Amand could not win. How can a religion be doubted which thus transforms hearts? The rapacious and bloodthirsty profligate, whom all that barbarous people knew and feared, had become an humble recluse, shut up in a voluntary prison; he slept on the stones; his food was coarse bread; his body was covered

with hair-cloth; he wore fetters on his feet, like those with which the jailers of Rome shackled the feet of the confessors of the faith. For three years Bavo persevered in this solitude and this expiation; at the end of that time the angels called him to come and receive the victor's crown. . . . He died, and barbarous tribes, whom his arms could never subdue, came to receive, at his glorious sepulchre, the eternal light of faith. . . . His memory is still dear to me; . . . I prayed for him on earth, and I am confident that he is praying for me in heaven. . . .

Now I am old. . . . My hand can no longer guide the plough; my dimmed eyes no longer permit me to do the writer's work; my broken voice can no longer teach the evangelical truths to the people; but young, active brethren, burning with a holy zeal, take the place of those who first undertook the work. . . . We bequeath to them the task which we have commenced. . . . They will clear these forests and these moors.* They will preserve the deposit of science and of noble traditions, and, above all, they will spread the apostolic fire over the earth. . . . Humble servants of God, faithful messengers of Providence, they will labor for the good of their brethren, without other hire than the eternal goods. May God be with them, and may he deign to grant to me, Sergius, a sinner, rest with the many holy souls who have already been admitted to the marriage-feast of the Lamb! Amen.

* The Benedictine monks were the clearers of Europe. (Guizot.)



IV.

THE SOLDIER—EIGHTH CENTURY.

I, GHEROLD, grandson of Landeald, conforming to the custom of my fathers, dictate to my nephew, Matfrid, religious in the Abbey of the Holy Sepulchre (Saint-Sépulchre), a short account of what I have seen in my campaigns, under Charles Martel, Duke of the Franks, and under Charlemagne, King of the Franks and most pious Emperor of the West.

Although living in the most remote extremity of Gaul, we have learned, nevertheless, that strength and power are no longer in the hands of the race of Clovis, the warlike king of our fathers. The mayors of the palace of Austrasia, the Pepins, have become the chiefs and leaders of the people. I have fought under their command, and I think that God, who desires the glory and salvation of the Franks, has opposed to these terrible enemies—the Frieslanders, the Saracens, the Saxons, and the inhabitants of Gascony—chiefs capable of leading to battle the most valiant people that exist under heaven.

Duke Charles, the son of Pepin and Alphéide, his second wife, possessed the principality of the Gauls, and, without being a king, all the regal

power was concentrated in his hands. He governed the people at home and protected them abroad. We dwelt in peace, cultivating our little farm. I was then young, when strange news spread through the countries of the Parisi, of the Soissonais, and the Cambresis. It was said that hordes of barbarians, coming from the deserts of Africa and Asia, crossing the mountains of the Gascons, and through plains and gorges, had come to invade the lands of the Franks. It was also said that the King of Aquitaine, old Eude, defeated by these pagans, had come to Duke Charles, begging him to save the whole country of the Franks, threatened by the disciples of Mohammed. The pagans, it was said, were going to cross the Loire, and their arms and their brutal avarice would not spare the sanctuary of the blessed Saint Martin. . . . These news were confirmed. Soon trumpets and clarions were heard sounding in the cities of Neustria and Austrasia, in the forests and the fields, and troops of warriors hastened towards the Loire. I was called upon, like other men of my age, to render military service. It was in the month of October, of the year 732, not far from the city of Poitiers, that the armies met; and for seven days we waited, without bending the bow or drawing the sword. We, the soldiers of Duke Charles, saw passing before our lines the Mussulman chiefs, mounted on light steeds, covered with long, white cloaks, armed with short swords or barbed arrows, which they threw and caught again while their horses were galloping. These barbarians, with their black eyes and tawny skins, looked at us in surprise, and pointed out to each other our long-haired chiefs

with their glittering arms. On the seventh day the battle began. The Mussulmans sent a shower of arrows on our army, but the long line of the Franks never wavered under that fearful shock; like a wall of iron, like a rampart of ice, the people of the North remained pressed one against the other, as though they were of marble. We all had but one heart, as we all had one faith. Twenty times did the pagans charge upon us, as rapid as the thunderbolt, as impetuous as the angry ocean; twenty times did they advance to break against the wall of flesh and of steel which we opposed to them. At sunset the wall was shaken. Duke Charles led us on to the combat, and our swords were plunged to the hilt in pagan blood. Night alone put an end to the battle. Duke Charles gave the signal to retreat, and, brandishing our swords in defiance, we passed the night on the plain. Next day the Arab tents were empty; the pagans had fled, leaving behind their treasures, which fell into our hands. We took again our homeward way. Charles, having collected the spoils of the enemy, returned to France in the glory of his triumph.

As for me, I tried to do my duty, incited, above all, by the great thought that I was fighting in the name of Christ, in the name of the Roman Church, and to defend the Empire of the Cross against the impious votaries of Mohammed. In the name of the Lord I fought with the sword and the *france*,* and I venture to hope that at the great day the Just Judge will not forget his soldier and servant.

I was in other wars with Duke Charles and his

* A weapon of the ancient Franks.

sons, Pepin and Karloman. I fought against the indomitable Friedlanders, entrenched in their isles and marshes; against the Saxons, obstinate worshippers of the Teutonic gods; I had the happiness of receiving the benediction of the most holy Pontiff, Boniface, sent to evangelize these people, by the order and under the protection of Pope Zachery and Duke Charles; I saw Lord Pepin elevated to the regal dignity, according to the words of the Sovereign Pontiff Zachery, who decreed, "He who possesses the regal power should also enjoy the honors of royalty"; and one day, going to the monastery of St. Sithin,* I saw there Childeric, the descendant of Merovæus, who, deposed and shaven, had been placed among the monks. These are events which I have witnessed, and in which I have taken part, fighting under the command of the princes who now possess the sovereignty of the country of the Franks.

Although old I followed the army of the most mighty King Charles, who was marching against the Lombards and their king Desiderius. And this is what I heard related by a worthy priest.

One of the first lords of the Frank kingdom, named Ogger, having incurred the wrath of the terrible Charles, had taken refuge with King Desiderius. Having heard of the approach of the dreaded Charles, Desiderius and Ogger went up on a very high tower, whence they could see from all sides the arrival of the Frankish army. They at first perceived a warlike equipage more numerous than those of Darius and of Julius Caesar. And Desiderius asked of Ogger :

* At St. Omer.

"Is not Charles with that great army?"

And Ogger answered: "Not yet."

Next came numbers of tribes assembled from all parts of the vast empire of the Franks. Desiderius, after having seen them, said to Ogger:

"Surely Charles is triumphantly advancing amongst that multitude?"

"No, not yet, not yet," replied Ogger.

Then Desiderius began to be disturbed, and said:

"What shall we do if he comes accompanied by still more warriors than these?"

"Thou shalt see how he will come," answered Ogger; "but I know not what will become of us."

Whilst they thus discoursed, the King's household appeared, with his body-guards, who never know rest. At this sight, Desiderius, bewildered, cried:

"Surely this is Charles?"

And Ogger repeated: "Not yet, not yet."

Next came the bishops, priests, and ecclesiastics of the royal chapel, with their retinue. Desiderius, desiring death, and no longer able to bear the light of day, murmured, sobbing:

"Let us descend and hide ourselves in the depths of the earth, that we may not see the face of so terrible an enemy."

The trembling Ogger, who knew the splendor and apparel of the incomparable Charles, having learned it by experience in better days, said then:

"When thou seest the grain bristle with fright in the fields, the Po and the Tesino become as dark as iron and overflow with their blackened waters the walls of the town, then thou mayest believe in the arrival of Charles."

He had not yet finished speaking when they began to see in the west like a dark cloud driven by the wind, which changed the light of day into funereal shades; then Charles approaching gradually, the brightness of his arms brought to the men shut up in the town a day more gloomy than any night.

Then in person came Charles, that man of iron, his head covered by an iron helmet, his arms enclosed in iron mail, his chest and shoulders of granite were protected by a coat of iron, he held in his left hand an iron spear, and his right was always laid on the hilt of his invincible sword; his boots, like those of his soldiers, were bound with iron, and his shield was all of iron. All who preceded him, all who marched beside him, all who followed, the whole army, had imitated their master as far as was in each one's power; the fields and the plains were all of iron; the iron bayonets reflected every ray of the sun. The ramparts shook with fright, the boldness of the young man was subdued, the wisdom of the old men put to naught, and all the citizens cried with confused noise:

"Alas! how much iron! how much iron!"

Ogger saw all this with one rapid glance, and said to Desiderius:

"Behold him whom thou hast been seeking!"

And so saying, he fell down almost lifeless. . . .

Such was the master who commanded us—the chief whom we followed. May God grant long life to our most mighty emperor! For him I have shed my blood; for him my son died at Roncesvaux, crushed by the rocks which the treacherous Gascons hurled on the army, led by Roland, the

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captain; but I do not regret either my blood nor
even the life of my beloved son, since both have
been given for the Church and the blessed kingdom
of the Franks.



V.

THE LABORER—NINTH CENTURY

MY grandfather, of happy memory, often repeated an expression which he heard from the lips of the mighty Emperor Charlemagne, in whose army he had served. That prince, being one day in a seaport town, saw from afar ships remarkable for their structure and the ease of their movements. At this sight the pious Charles, leaning on a window-sill, remained long lost in thought, his face bedewed with tears. As none of his courtiers dared to question him, he himself explained to them the cause of his tears. "Know ye," said he, "O my faithful friends! why I have wept so much? I fear not that those people can harm me by their vain threats; but it afflicts me much that, while I am living, they dare to insult this shore, and I am oppressed with sorrow because I foresee how many evils they will cause to my descendants and my subjects."

The words of that most wise emperor are accomplished. O fatal days! The ships which he saw were those of the pagan Northmen—those pirates who come every year, on their vessels as light as birds, from the far North, and follow the course of our rivers, burning, pillaging, and

devastating all before them. I was young, and I had been sent with a message from my father to a farm situated not far from Haspres, in Cambresis, when I saw in the distance a prodigious crowd of people, and I heard the solemn chanting of the Psalms. I approached, and I saw monks, wearing the habit of Saint Benedict, walking barefoot, carrying on their shoulder a shrine covered with plates of gold. I was told that these religious were coming from the interior of Neustria, from the Abbey of Jumièges, whence they had fled before the Norman pirates, and that they were coming to hide in their domain of Haspres the relics of their blessed founders, Saint Hugh and Saint Achard. It was pitiable to see Christian priests flying before the pagans. In all our churches the invocation was added to the Litany of the Saints, "From the fury of the Northmen, O Lord, deliver us!" We were living peacefully on our little farm, my wife, my children, and I, Hugo, grandson of Ghéroid. The country was at peace, and we gathered without fear the fruits of our labor, when the tales of travellers and pilgrims informed us of the desolation in all the towns situated on the banks of rivers. The large and noble city of Anvers, seated on the banks of the Escant, had just been burned by the fierce sea-kings; the banks of the Somme were devastated; provinces and towns depopulated; the few inhabitants who survived fled in every direction, powerless and terror-stricken, or fell beneath the sword. The bodies of the saints, so long preserved in the monasteries which they had founded and edified by their examples, were brought into the enclosure of the cities. Danger was

coming to us. On all sides were seen laborers whose houses and harvests had been given to the flames, church people whose eyes had been put out, widowed wives and orphaned children. And no remedy for these great evils! These barbarians come more numerous than snow-flakes in winter; they are hardy, rapacious, and indefatigable. Our lord, Baldwin, called the Bald,* tried to fortify his towns by surrounding them with ditches and walls; but, alas! of what use are defences of stone if men's hearts be feeble and cowardly?† Like others, I have undergone the misfortunes of the times in which we live; may it please God to spare my descendants!

It was at the close of the year 881: the Lord had blessed our labor; the barns and cellars were overflowing with the crops, and our stalls were filled with cattle. I was returning from the Monastery of Elnon, the prior of which—a learned man—had given me some cordials for one of my servants, who was ill of a malignant fever, and I was going homeward with a joyful heart, for I thought that my wife would be waiting for me at the fireside, plying her distaff, and that my children would be glad at my return.

The sun was setting and the horizon was red. . . . I thought it was the mists of an autumn day, reddened by the sun's last rays, which thus colored the heavens; but soon a thick black smoke and sparks went up into the air, and hid the sun

* Baldwin the Bald, second Count of Flanders.

† According to the account of historians, the terrified people no longer dared to defend themselves against the Northmen.

from my view. . . . I hastened my steps : a little hill concealed my house from me : I climbed it and went down the other side quicker than thought : . . . and I saw, . . . O holy God ! I saw my house in flames, being reduced to a funeral pile, from which came forth fire and smoke ; the stables, cellars, barns, were burned. . . . Not a cry nor a voice came from amongst the ruins ; I darted forward, I called. No one answered me. . . . O unhappy man that I was ! . . . I ran all over the farm : . . . ruin and death everywhere ! . . . But, coming to a field which was watered by the Escald, I saw at a distance the light, narrow vessels which had brought the Northmen to our shore. . . . They were flying, the pagans, the thieves, the murderers. I was following them with my eyes and my impotent curses, when a feeble groan reached my ear. . . . I looked ; and in the grass on the bank I found my youngest child, my little Baldwin, who had been thrown there naked, and with a large wound on his hip. I took him in my arms, and he knew me :

"O father !" said he in a faint voice, "wicked men came ; they shut mother and my brothers up in the stables, and burned them, and they hurt me very much." . . .

Great God ! pardon me if I then cursed those who had brought so many misfortunes on my house ! Thy most sweet Son Jesus prayed for his murderers, and I, miserable sinner, could only curse them ! But I now ask thee that the blood of those innocent victims, of my good wife and my precious slaughtered children, may

ascend to thy throne and beg grace for these pagans!

I possessed nothing now but my land, stripped and bare. For help and protection I paid tribute of that, which I had held free from my ancestors, to the Abbey of Saint Amand, of which I became a vassal. . . . Liberty, family, fortune, I lost all in one day. From the fury of the Northman, O Lord, deliver us!

However, religious are lenient masters; they brought up my son Baldwin, and instructed him in human science; and, under the command of the brave and holy Gozlin,* Abbot of Saint Amand, I had the happiness of fighting the Northmen. . . . I saw them vanquished by the Lord Count of Hainaut, Rénier, called Long-Neck, and I know that, on every side, the owners of the land are fortifying the towns and cities, training their vassals to arms, in order to resist the incursions of the pirates. Our priests and bishops are seeking to subject them to the laws of the Gospel; the time is perhaps not far distant when these woes of our age will cease; but who among the living can forget the churches profaned, the cities and villages burned, our women, our children dying in torture, and even our liberty sold, because the sackings consumed our patrimony, and trod our inheritance under foot? Thou hast willed it, O Lord! Blessed be thy will.

*Gozlin, Abbot of Saint Amand, and afterwards Bishop of Paris.



VI.

THE PILGRIM—TENTH CENTURY.

I, ROBERT, unworthy prior of the Abbey of Saint Amand, at the request of Baldwin, formerly brought up in this monastery, have written the account of his life and the confession of his faults. He thought that this account might serve to instruct covetous and ambitious men, who pamper the passions of princes and the great, to the damnation of their own souls.

Baldwin, the son of one of our vassals, having early given evidence of a quick mind and a rare intelligence, was, through the charity of the Abbot Gozlin, instructed in human science; but, whatever care was taken to inculcate in him the spirit of piety and of humility, without which all science is vain, he testified from his youth the desire of raising himself above his condition, and a great ardor in his projects of ambition and of wealth. One day, Count Baldwin, commonly called the Bald, having come to visit our monastery, took notice of young Baldwin, who had had occasion to make himself agreeable to the prince by some slight service and by his lively sallies. The Count wished to attach him to his household, and asked him of us. We could not refuse, and Baldwin followed his lord with a heart full of joy and hope. He was employed

amongst the grooms of the hounds, and there again he pleased the Marquis, and by his intelligence, aptitude, and extraordinary zeal he gradually gained his whole confidence.

It is well known what was then the condition of the Frankish kingdom. The lords, who were so submissive formerly under the powerful hand of Charlemagne, felt themselves strong in their turn under feeble kings; and one of them—Eudes, Count of Paris—maintained himself for some years on the throne of France, notwithstanding the claims of the lawful heir, young Charles, son of King Charles the Bald. The prelates, however, and the whole priesthood, remembering their oath, given of old to the father of the most pious emperor, and by which all the chiefs of the Franks pledged themselves to never recognize as king a man who was not of the race of Pepin; and, faithful to that vow of their predecessors, Foulques, Archbishop of Rheims, and his suffragans, the metropolitans of Treves, Cologne, and Mayence, crowned the young Charles as king. The powerful Prince of Flanders ranged himself under the command of his true sovereign, while Herbert, Count of Vermandois, one of the most powerful lords in the kingdom, openly espoused the cause of the Count de Paris. Thence sprang a deadly hatred between Count Baldwin and the house of Vermandois; and in the war which took place between the partisans of King Charles and those of King Eudes, the brother of the Prince of Flanders, Raoul de Cambrai, surnamed on account of his bravery Taille-fer (Cut-iron), perished by the hand of Herbert of Vermandois. This was a great

affliction for Count Baldwin, who loved this brother above all creatures ; and, in place of turning to the Lord, who would have comforted him in his affliction, he revolved in his mind projects of vengeance, forgetting him who has said, "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay." One day, while hunting in the forest of Mormal, it chanced that he found himself alone with his servant Baldwin. The Count was not, as usual, inspired by his favorite exercise ; with spear down, he rode along, lost in his own dark thoughts, when Baldwin, who was somewhat familiar with him, ventured to say :

"My good lord, thy thoughts are not here ; and yet the forest is fine and the game abundant."

"I am following another scent," said the prince, looking at his vassal ; "but to reach that quarry I would need a faithful arm and a steady hand."

"If one knew the game, good lord, one might pounce upon it."

"Knowst thou the mortal enemy of my house ? What bloody wolf rushed upon the brave Raoul ? Blood calls for blood."

"It shall have it. But what would the huntsman obtain ?"

"Gold, and the friendship of his lord."

Two days after, Herbert de Vermandois, on going forth from his castle, received a mortal wound from a dagger, and some time after Baldwin gave up his post of groom of the hounds, to become his lord's secretary.

It was a great crime, a cruel murder, which for long after frightened the lords in their castles, as well as their subjects in their huts ; but soon a greater crime terrified all Christendom. I have

said before that the Lord Foulques, Archbishop of Rheims, was the friend, the father, and protector of the young King Charles. The latter had just granted to him the Abbey of St. Sithin, or St. Bertin, which the prelate dearly loved, for it was there he had spent his youth. But Count Baldwin, by a scandalous abuse, which has become too common in our days, desired to possess, although a layman, this house of God, the patrimony of which belonged to the poor; and when he saw his hopes frustrated, he conceived against the venerable Foulques a hatred which could only end in blood; and a second time (O unhappy fate of princes!) Baldwin was near him, as the dagger is found ready to the hand which is about to use it for murder. King Charles and Archbishop Foulques had met at the manor of Compiègne; the old man had come to take leave of his young king; he was journeying along the road to Rheims, surrounded by a few followers, when Baldwin, followed by some hired assassins, fell upon him and pierced him with his lance. The parricide was accomplished. That wretch, brought up within the sacred walls of the Monastery of St. Amand, did not fear to shed the blood of the pontiff of the Lord.

From the Rhine to the Pyrenees flew like wildfire the news of this crime. Baldwin, under the powerful protection of the Prince of Flanders, ran no temporal risk; but the Church, nevertheless, had still her thunders. A council, assembled at Rheims, pronounced sentence of excommunication against the assassins of the most pious Foulques: "Let them be cursed," cried the bishops;

"cursed in the city, cursed in the fields, cursed in their offspring, cursed in the fruit of their lands, and their herds of oxen, and their flocks of sheep; let them be cursed coming in and going out; cursed within the house, cursed without. May their bowels rot; let no Christian even salute them; let them receive the burial of the ass, and let them lie on the dunghill in the face of the whole world."*

Under the protection of the prince whom he had served with such arduous fidelity, Baldwin feared nothing, and he lived in great wealth. Several years elapsed thus, during which great events were accomplished. The Normans, under their chief Rollo, made an alliance with the Franks; they received as their domain fair Neustria, with its fertile fields, its limpid waters, and, converted to Christianity, they really formed a part of the Frankish nation, dear to God and man; young King Charles, too feeble to resist his great vassals, was seized by the perfidious Herbert de Vermandois, and shut up in the tower of Péronne, thence transported to Orleans, where he died in the year of Christ 929. Ralph, Duke of Burgundy, was seated on the throne of Clodowig and of Charlemagne. On his death, the last descendant of the race of Pepin, Louis IV. d'Outremer, ascended to the place of his ancestors, but only for a few days. Those were troublous and disastrous times; hatred and murder seemed as nothing to the men of that age; like Lamech of old as it is written in the Book of Genesis, they said, laughing, "I have just killed a man!"

* Acts of the Council of Rheims.

William Long-Sword, Duke of Normandy, perished, through shameful treachery, slain by the order, and perhaps by the hand of Arnoul, Count of Flanders and son of Baldwin. . . . These fierce lords thought only of blood and violence, and their fatal passions always found docile instruments around them. Baldwin, who had passed from the service of the father to that of the son, was, he confessed to me, the witness, if not the accomplice, of this murder. But there the grace of God awaited him.

The sight of the forsaken corpse of this prince, but lately so brilliant and so chivalrous, recalled to the troubled conscience of Baldwin the murders which the waters of human prosperity could never wash away. He looked at, touched those wounds, and he remembered. He confessed his iniquity before the Lord his God, and he desired to do penance. He immediately left the Isle of Pecquigny, where the murder of that powerful lord had been accomplished, and, walking day and night barefoot, he went to throw himself at the feet of the pious Bishop Ausbert, then occupying the See of Cambrai. There he confessed his crimes, and asked, on his knees, humbled under ashes and hair-cloth, to be released from the Anathema of Holy Church. The pious prelate did not close his door on this sinner whom the Shepherd of the sheep brought back on his shoulders, but he prescribed to him, as his canonical penance, a fast of three years and a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre of our Lord.

Baldwin obeyed, but before setting out on his long journey he gave to the poor the wealth which he had acquired by bloodshed, and after journeying

day and night, clad in a poor woollen tunic which concealed a hair-cloth, fasting, praying, and living on alms, he reached the shores of Provence, and there embarked for Palestine. He visited in turn the sacred places, and all were witnesses of his penance and his tears. How could the sinner refrain from sobbing and beating his breast at sight of the Mount of Olives, of Golgotha, of the sepulchral cave where the Saviour slept for three days, following step by step the sorrowful footprints of the Son of God upon earth ! But to the just tears shed on the footsteps of Jesus Christ, our sweet and merciful Saviour, the numerous pilgrims who visit the Holy Land mingle those which are forced from them by the sorrowful fate of Christian people who are there, praying and suffering around the sacred tomb, and each day subjected to the outrages of the infidels. O Lord ! why dost thou delay in avenging thy people, and delivering from the oppression of unbelievers these memorable places, which thou didst choose thyself, to consummate there the greatest of sacrifices ?

It is only at the price of gold that pilgrims are admitted into the sanctuaries, and often their blood waters the threshold.

Baldwin had the happiness of suffering for Jesus Christ many humiliations and outrages, which, doubtless, served as expiation for his crimes in the eyes of the just Judge, who also saw the deep repentance of his soul ; and, after three years passed in prayer, mortification, and persecution, he returned to Europe, and received absolution of his crimes.

He asked to retire amongst us, so as to end in

solitude his life, contaminated by dealings and intercourse with the world; and, as a lay brother in this holy house, he long edified us by the severity of his penance and by his love of humiliation. Often, at the request of the Father Abbot, he would tell us of his long journeys; he described the Holy Places, which are to all of us as our own country; he represented to us those vast multitudes of pilgrims, that peaceful army, which ask no other favor than that of being allowed to weep at the tomb of its Saviour; he also made us weep relating the sufferings and insults which faithful Christians undergo, and we all shuddered, saying: "Who then shall deliver them?" But, alas! what does it matter? The trials and pleasures of earth shall soon end; we are approaching the end of human things; when this century has elapsed, the world shall have rendered its account to its Judge, and the fire of heaven, coming down on the earth, shall have consumed the place of our exile. The air, the land, and the sea are full of warning; there is in the ocean extraordinary movements; a whale, which is no other than the leviathan of the Scriptures, has come aground on the coast of Normandy; the elements are disturbed at their approaching dissolution, and men's souls are turning towards the God who is soon to judge them. Everywhere people are becoming detached from perishable goods; they are given to the poor, to churches, to monasteries. Once more, alas! what does it matter? Soon shall the poor be first in the kingdom of God, earthly churches shall be changed into eternal tabernacles, and the inmates of monasteries shall be judged according to the

graces which they have received and the use they have made of them. . . . May the Master find us with loins girt and with lamps lit!

I forgot to add that Baldwin died on ashes seven years after his entrance to the Monastery of Elnon. When dying, he made a public confession of his crimes, and recommended himself to the prayers of his brethren. If any one comes after me and reads this, let him pray for us, poor sinners!

This was written in the first year of the reign of Hugh Capet, God having transferred to this powerful family the sceptre which had remained for two hundred and thirty-five years in the hands of the descendants of Charlemagne.



CHAPTER VII.

THE CHURCH-BUILDER AND THE TROUBADOUR— ELEVENTH CENTURY.

WE were four brothers, sons of Turoid, a tenant of the Abbey of Elnon, and descendants of Baldwin, formerly secretary to the Lord Count of Flanders, and since lay brother in the Monastery of Saint Amand, where he ended his life in penance. The monks were good and lenient lords to us, liberal and benevolent, and, comparing our lot with those of the vassals of the lay lords, could only thank Heaven. Still, my young brother, Hervé, who had been taught some learning by one of the monks, became dissatisfied and disgusted with the rudeness of our vassals. He secretly left our father's house and the abbey lands, and fled, without letting any one know whither he was going nor the plan which he had formed. Some thought that he had gone to the Holy Land, others believed that he had retired to some desert place to lead the life of a hermit. It seemed to me that a certain love of adventure had alone drawn him away, and I cherished the hope of one day seeing him again.

Like my elder brothers, I desired nothing else

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than the peaceful life which I had seen my father and mother lead; but I wished to share this life with a young girl, whose father was a vassal of the Count d'Esne, a patron of the Abbey of Elnon. I loved her and she loved me, and our hearts were torn when her lord disposed of her in marriage to one of his people. Alone in the world, my father having just died, wounded to the depth of my soul, I presented myself to the Father Master of Novices, that I might be received as a lay brother, but he wished to try my vocation, and put me off for some time. I was returning from the fields one evening, thinking sadly of my betrothed, now sitting by the hearth of another husband, when, near a little chapel dedicated to the Blessed Mother of God, I saw a man kneeling in prayer. He was clad in a poor camelot blouse, and carried on his shoulder a mason's trowel and hod. He had a quiet, good-natured face, but when he raised his large gray eyes it seemed as if his thought penetrated into your soul, like a wedge into wood.

"Good rest to thee, master," said I to him.

"God give it to thee, my brother," answered he kindly. "Couldst thou tell me the name of the country in which I now am?"

"Thou art on the lands of the Abbey of Saint Amand. Yonder is the spire of the church and the blue roof of the monastery; around it the town of Saint Amand, where a free fair is held to-day. Is it there thou art going, master?"

"No, my brother, I desire neither the pleasure nor the business of the world. I wish to find a lodging for the night, and to-morrow at the hour of prime I will proceed on my way."



CHAPTER VII.

THE CHURCH-BUILDER AND THE TROUBADOUR— ELEVENTH CENTURY.

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"No, my brother, I desire neither the pleasure nor the business of the world. I wish to find a lodging for the night, and to-morrow at the hour of prime I will proceed on my way."

"Come to the abbey," said I. "Strangers are welcome there."

"Let us go there," said he, "under the care of God and of Our Lady."

We took the way to the monastery. The bell was slowly ringing, and its voice came to us through the pure, cool evening air.

"Brother Damaso is in his agony," said I. "He is still very young."

"The life of man is as a few days," answered my companion. "Happy is he who has the one thing necessary."

Reaching the abbey, he stopped, and considered for some moments its majestic structure, its thick walls, pierced with small grated windows, the fortified works on the outside, which were intended to defend the house of God from the incursions of the Northmen, the church built in wood and brick, the arched porch of which was guarded by two marble lions, between which the lord abbot sat when dispensing justice to his vassals.

"It is a fine building," said I.

"It bears the stamp of past ages—of barbarous ages," answered the mason; "to-day, thanks to the zeal of our pious King Robert and the learned Pope Sylvester,* who sits in the chair of St. Peter, finer monuments are being raised, with God's good aid."

Whilst he spoke thus, the door of the abbey opened; the brother porter introduced us into that part of the house reserved for guests, and soon

*Sylvester II. (Gerbert). This learned Pope gave a powerful impulse to all the arts.

the father-host came, with great humility, to wash the traveller's feet, whilst the cellarer prepared a collation of herbs and fruits; for on that day was kept the vigil of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul. When the mason placed himself at the table, the host remained to serve him, and allowed me to stay until the closing of the abbey gates. They began to converse, and my companion gave many proofs of learning and wisdom.

"Whither art thou going?" at length asked the host. "Why dost thou not take advantage of the three days of rest that our house offers to pilgrims and travellers?"

"My rest is not here," answered the mason, smiling. "My work and my companions await me. . . . I am going to Laon, to do there as much as I can of the Lord's work."

"And what is that work? Who art thou?"

"I am a builder for the good God, a miserable and unworthy member of those pious corporations who endeavor, in all places, either to repair old churches or to build new and more beautiful ones. Thou knowest, most reverend father in God, our forefathers were much alarmed at the approach of the year one thousand, which they thought would bring the end of the world and the great day of divine justice; but when that year had passed, and hope was renewed in their hearts, the world seemed to revive. The sacred basilicas were rebuilt, from bottom to top, in almost all parts of the world, especially in Italy and Gaul, although the greater number were still solid enough to require no repairs. The Christian nations seemed to vie with each other as to who would raise the

richest and most beautiful churches ; one would have said that the whole world, by common consent, had thrown off its rags to cover itself with new churches as with a white garment. My brethren and I have consecrated our strength and our life to this generous toil ; we go from city to city, hod and trowel in hand ; everywhere we build tabernacles to the hidden God, we raise asylums of prayer, we strive to make the very stones themselves speak a language worthy of the Creator ; and we hope, as the wages of our labors, to obtain, after the evil days of this life, a place in that divine city, whose foundations are of jasper, and its walls of precious stones."

The mason had become animated ; his eyes shone with faith and fervor. The monk listened attentive and charmed ; and I . . . something said to me in the depths of my soul, "Go and do likewise. Work for God, forget the world, and thou wilt find peace."

The bell announced the closing of the gates. I left the mason and the monk, and I went to the church, which was left open on account of the next day's festival. The father-master of novices was in the confessional ; I knelt at his feet, and told him simply what I felt. He listened with much kindness and attention, and answered :

"It is a great and holy work, my son, to which thou wouldst consecrate thyself. Thou wilt labor not only for the present time, but for future generations—for those ages of little faith which shall come after us, to which the great monuments erected by your hands shall record the glory of God, the beauty of his house, and the wonders of

his love. Thou art unhappy in the world, I think ; thou art not called to the religious life which thou didst wish to embrace ; but it may be that what thou now feelest is a divine inspiration. . . . If so, thou wilt be free to follow it. Pray, my son, and I will also pray for thee and with thee. . . ."

Some days passed, during which the mason did not leave the abbey. He edified the religious by his spirit of piety and of penance, and he excited such ardor in the young novices that they wished to go with him to build temples to the glory of the Most High God. My resolution remained unshaken, and the Father Abbot gave me permission to depart. I left the farm to my eldest brother Nicholas, the mill to my young brother William ; I took with me only a cross of olive-wood, which my uncle Baldwin had brought back from the great pilgrimage, and I set out poor and free.

We repaired to the city of Laon, whose Bishop was rebuilding the principal church, which had been destroyed by the barbarians of the North. Oh ! what a spectacle my eyes beheld. Innumerable workmen, ranged under the orders of a chief, called the Master of Art, were occupied, some in cutting the stone, in carving the heads of pillars, the *bassi-rilievi*, the statues of saints ; others were cutting and fashioning the wood, pounding the mortar, handling the trowel, or doing duty by carrying building materials or eatables.

All worked without other salary than their daily bread. It was a marvel to see powerful men, proud of their birth and riches, accustomed to a life of ease and luxury, fasten themselves to a car with traces, and drag stones, lime, wood, and all the

necessary materials for the construction of the sacred edifice. Sometimes a thousand persons, men and women, were attached to the same car (they being sometimes so large), and yet there was perfect silence, not the slightest whisper being heard. When they stopped on the road, they spoke but only of their sins, which they confessed with prayers and tears; then the priests busied themselves in extinguishing hatred, having debts settled, and, if they found one hardened enough not to pardon his enemies and refuse to listen to these pious exhortations, he was immediately unfastened from the cart and dismissed from the pious company.*

I was presented to the corporation by my companion, who seemed to exercise some authority over them, which was undoubtedly due to the admirable talents which God had given him. He directed the labors of the masons, and under his direction I learned to erect walls, to build and to adorn the buttresses, to design the elegant outline of arches, and to raise majestic towers to the clouds. I was at length, after some pious ceremonies the secret of which is kept among us, received among the affiliated, and sent, under the orders of our chiefs, wherever the glory of God required it, that being the sole object of our art and our labors. I went on, for my poor share, to erect the glorious Monastery of Saint Martin of Tours, and the church which King Robert was having built at Orleans in honor of Saint Aignan, the patron of

* These details are also in a letter of Haimon, Abbot of Saint Pierre of Dives, in Normandy, 1145.

that city. This building was forty fathoms long, twelve in thickness, ten in height, with a hundred and twenty-three windows, and nineteen altars, consecrated to as many saints. The front of this house of God was built with admirable skill, and on the same plan as that of the Convent of Saint Mary Mother of Christ, Saint Vital, and Saint Agricola, at Clermont in Auvergne.

The sacred art made great progress; the low, heavy pillars of the cathedrals built by our ancestors were gradually raised; the elliptical arches sprang up in bolder curves; the towers rose higher on rows of triple arches; the portals were decorated with ornaments and carvings of fruits, pearls, the figures of men and beasts; and even some of our brethren, giving birth to new ideas, raised, elongated the curves of the arches, which, in their elegant designs, resembled two hands raised and joined in prayer. To this form they gave the name of ogival. Others, seeking always to serve the Lord in the person of their brethren, built hospitals or threw bridges over rivers; and I have heard that, in Provence, a shepherd named Benezet, inspired by God, built, without any human knowledge or resources, an admirable bridge over the most dangerous part of the Rhone. May God aid men of good-will!

As long as God left me strength, I consecrated it to these pious labors, happy in working for heaven, and to realize, in raising these chapels, churches, cathedrals, the grandest idea which it is given to man to conceive here below—the worship and adoration of the Sovereign Lord. I was happy in thinking that after us, when we have long been

sleeping forgotten in our graves, generations will come and pray beneath these vaults raised by our hands ; I felt an ineffable consolation in collecting the stones for the altars on which the most sweet Saviour Jesus will immolate himself till the end of time ; I redoubled my confidence in Mary, Our Lady, Mother of God and our hope, when I contributed to build her chapels, where so many afflicted souls shall come and find peace ; and the memory of all these houses of God, to which I brought my stone and my sweat, still consoles and rejoices me now when I am old and infirm at my fireside. I was already old, and was still working at the building of the chapel of the Monastery of Ferrière in Gatinois, where travellers and the sick were received and sheltered, when I was asked to assist in carrying a poor sick pilgrim into the interior of the house. I went, and I saw a man of some forty years, who seemed overcome with fatigue and illness. He had with him a shepherd's scrip and a viol. I raised him, and helped to place him gently on a bed ; there his eyes opened, he looked at me, and I seemed to meet my mother's look, which returned to me through the eyes of her last born, my young brother Hervé. I kept apart while they attended to his first wants, and when he was alone, inside the serge curtains, I went and knelt beside him. He was not asleep. He spoke in a weak and feverish voice, and his words were like the cadence of the hymns and canticles which we sang as we went to work. I took his hand, he turned towards me ; his eyes shone like a dying lamp.

"What wouldst thou of me ?" said he.

"I would know thy name."

"My name is Hervé, and I am a troubadour at the court of the most mighty Lord William, Duke of Normandy. . . . I seek a lay in honor of my Lady Mary, Mother of God ; but my thoughts are confused : . . . I am suffering."

"Hervé," cried I, "wert thou not born on the lands of the Abbey of Elnon ?"

"It is true ; and the taste for the gay art, the love of adventure, has led me far from my family and my country."

"Hervé, dost thou not know thy brother Simon ?" . . .

He raised himself and looked at me for a moment ; then he threw his trembling arms around my neck, and said with tears :

"Is't thou, O my brother ? I see, then, one of my own before I die. Blessed be God, and thee, most sweet Virgin !"

We embraced each other with inexpressible joy, though mingled with bitterness, for I felt that I had found my brother only to lose him. In broken words he told me his life ; he had been famous, he had composed lays, songs, fables, which had won the applause of noble ladies, of princes, and of barons ; and his sickness had attacked him in the midst of his success and his glory. . . . He offered to God the sacrifice of his life, and yet he spoke one of his verses, and said :

"I shall not be forgotten. . . . My verses will go down to posterity. The song of *Roland* shall be sung in the hall of barons to excite faith and valor in the minds of the young men. . . . Fair damsels will repeat my lays and my songs." . . .

He interrupted himself, and exclaimed : "Alas !

my Saviour, pardon a proud sinner. Be merciful to him at the day of judgment."

Towards morning he grew worse; he asked for and received the Sacraments with great devotion, and about noon of the same day he died. . . . O merciful God! receive his soul into paradise.

I had learned to read, and I examined the papers left by my poor brother. They were rhymes, some finished, some uncompleted thoughts, of which he bore the secret into the grave.

Old age had come; my hand was heavy and my eyes were dim; I left the corporation and my brethren in labor and in prayer; I returned to Elnon to die, where my father and mother had died. My brother Nicholas was living, and had several children; but I heard strange things concerning my brother William the miller.

The land which he held had been sold to the Baron of Mortmain. William had followed his lord over the sea to the country of the English. The Duke of Normandy headed this expedition; he conquered the land; from being a duke he became a king, and all who had accompanied him had great gain. The poor foot-soldier, who had crossed the sea with a stuffed doublet and a bow of black wood, donned the shirt of mail and mounted the steed of a knight; the mere knight became rich enough to raise a banner and assemble a company of men-at-arms; the Norman herdsmen and Flemish weavers became nobles; it was said that William had married an English girl of noble lineage; he had become the possessor of her lands, and one of the feudal lords of the kingdom which the Conqueror, as they call him, had founded. May these riches

be not a curse to him ! We shall never see him again. As for me, with my brother and his children, I await in peace the hour of my death. I think over the labors of my youth, and from those earthly Jerusalems which I helped to build, my mind is recalled to the heavenly Jerusalem, to which I hope soon to be admitted, through the grace of the Divine Saviour, Jesus.



VIII.

THE CRUSADER—TWELFTH CENTURY.

I WAS still very young, a little boy of scarcely thirteen, when something extraordinary took place in the country in which we lived. Every one, monks, barons, free-holders, vassals, men, women, children, coming from the most distant places, crowded under the lindens which surrounded the church, and waited there, in great fear and reverence, as if they expected either the bishop or the sovereign of the country. The bells rang; I was waiting like the others, seated on a block of stone, and my heart beat, I knew not why. At length was heard in the distance the sound of footsteps and of horses; the monks were chanting "*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini!*"* the people cried "*Noël! Noël!*"† the ranks opened, and the Lord Abbot appeared, having on his left the Lord d'Esne, a patron of the Abbey, and on his right a small man of low stature, clad in a woollen cloak, carrying a pilgrim's staff, mounted on a mule, and of very unpretending appearance; and yet all the honors were directed to him. He got down from his mule, threw himself at the feet of the Lord

* "*Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord!*"

† Literally, "*Christmas.*"

Abbot, whose blessing he humbly received, and ascended a little platform which had been erected for him. Thence he cast a long look on the people, raised his eyes to heaven, and, in a low and thrilling voice, he uttered words that I have never forgotten.

He spoke of the Holy Land, which he had visited, of the glorious sepulchre of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the places which had witnessed his Passion, of the Garden of Olives, of the Prætorium, of Calvary; he recalled all the memories of our faith, all that our divine and most sweet Saviour suffered for us; he told how he had seen the places watered by the blood of our Redeemer, how he had followed the sorrowful Way of the Cross, kissed the stone of the most Holy Sepulchre; and when the picture of the love and sufferings of Jesus had drawn tears from all eyes, then he reminded the multitude that these holy and venerable places were in the power of unbelievers, that the disciples of Mohammed were reigning there where Christ had deigned to live, to suffer, and to die. He described the profanations and sacrileges which he had witnessed, the torments and the persecutions that a godless people made those endure who went to visit the Holy Land. He had seen Christians loaded with irons, dragged into slavery, fastened to the yoke like beasts of burden; he had seen the oppressors of Jerusalem sell to the children of Christ the permission to salute the tomb of their God, wring from them their very bread, and exact tributes even from poverty; he had seen the ministers of God torn from the sanctuary, beaten with scourges, and condemned to an ignominious death. . . .

As he went on, all hearts swelled with anger and with grief. A dull murmur ran through the crowd, women wept, men placed their hand on their knives or their swords. At length the Lord Gaultier de Douai, who was amongst his hearers, advanced the first, and asked to enter in the "Way of God," and the Lord Abbot immediately took from the hands of the prior a cross of red cloth, which he fastened on the shoulder of that brave knight. Every voice cried out "God wills it! God wills it!" and the men went in hundreds to receive the cross, and pledge themselves by vow to the truce of God with Christian people, and to war against the infidels. The priests blessed those who received the sign of the holy war, saying:

"Receive this sign, the symbol of the passion and death of the Saviour of the world, so that in thy journey sin and misfortune may not overtake thee, and that thou mayest return happier, and, above all, better, to thy kindred."

And the people repeated:

"He who will not bear his cross and come after me is not worthy of me."

Others exclaimed:

"The coward remains behind; for me, I will go."

The poor pilgrim who had thus put into the hearts of all this great and ardent desire was called Peter the Hermit.

Soon the castles and the fields were deserted; religious went forth from the cloisters, hermits quitted their solitudes, and, like a torrent, this incalculable multitude rushed towards the East. Of these brave men, a great number following the lead

of Gaultier *Sans Avoir*, perished in the forests of Eastern Europe; others, wiser and more prudent, under the command of a knight of our country, Godfrey de Bouillon, advanced to Jerusalem. I have heard from men, learned in the things of God, that the whole Eastern Church had known beforehand of the wonderful event which was to deliver it; the saints and the kings of ages gone before had announced to the patriarchs and bishops the arrival of the crusaders, and the shade of Charlemagne was seen exhorting the Christians to combat the infidels.

The holy city was taken after many battles and great hardships endured by the Christians; the Lord Godfrey was elected king, but he would neither be consecrated nor crowned king of Jerusalem, because he did not wish to wear a crown of gold where the King of kings, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, wore a crown of thorns on the day of his passion. In the hall of the baron as in the hut of the serf were sung the exploits and the valor of the defenders of the cross, and almost every family congratulated itself on having given a soldier to Jesus Christ and a martyr to heaven. All were eager to celebrate the glory of the most pious Godfrey, that of Tancred, and of the Count of Flanders, our mighty lord, Robert, who was called the son of Saint George, the lance and sword of Christians.

But, notwithstanding the valor of these brave knights and their successors, and of all the Christian people who marched under their command, the unbelievers ceased not to threaten the Holy City, and, forty-five years after the taking of Jeru-

salem, the cause of our Lord Jesus and the great voyage beyond the sea were preached again. It was in the reign of Louis the Seventh, Thierry of Alsace being Count of Flanders. I who write this had been from my youth in the service of the Abbey of Elmon, and I had gained some renown in the use of the bow and arrow, having loved arms as well as the plough, when the place where I dwelt was exchanged for some land of the Sire de Noyelles, and I passed with the soil into the service of the new lord. This was in the year of Our Lord 1145. I was grieved at seeing myself with my children given over to the service of any other master than the monks, who were good and gentle lords to us; but my heart was comforted when my master placed me in the number of his men-at-arms, and the holy war was proclaimed throughout the barony. It was preached by the Blessed Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, a holy man endowed with the gift of miracles. Being in the retinue of my lord, I heard and saw this admirable man; it was at Etampes, where, in presence of the king and the great barons, he preached the crusades. He was irresistible; exhausted by the fasts and privations of the desert, the breath of life being barely in him, he persuaded by his aspect before he did so by his words; his voice was strong in a frail body; simple with the simple, it was said that he was learned with the learned, and abounding in instructions full of science and of virtue with men of lofty mind. On hearing his discourse, which penetrated and inflamed the heart, all arose and asked for the cross. My lord took it and caused his followers to take it; and, about Pentecost of the year

1147, we set out on the holy pilgrimage. We followed the banner of the Count of Flanders, of whom my lord was a vassal. The flower of chivalry had taken the cross; deserted towns and castles were seen with widows and orphans whose husbands and fathers were still living. We marched towards the East, keeping in great peace and concord with the inhabitants of the countries through which we passed; but, when we had reached the frontiers of the Greek Empire, the army began to suffer from want; the inhabitants shut themselves up in their towns and castles, letting down to us their provisions with cords from the top of the walls. This tardy way of furnishing us with food could not satisfy the multitude of pilgrims, and, weary of suffering from famine in a country abounding in everything, they began to procure what they required by theft and pillage. I spared as much as I could the poor peasants, remembering what I was myself, and thinking, as I saw poor helpless creatures, of my wife and my children whom I had left so far away.

The Greeks hastened with every means in their power the departure of the Latins. The Germans, subjects of the Emperor Conrad, took their way towards Phrygia, but, having only provisions for eight days, and pressed by an incalculable number of the enemy, they were obliged to beat a retreat, and their Emperor came to the King of France, and said: "My Lord King, you whom nature has given me for a neighbor and a kinsmen, and whom God has preserved to protect me in a pressing necessity, I wish to be no longer separated from you. Let my tents be pitched where you think best, I only

ask you to permit that my companions-in-arms may join with yours." The King received him with great kindness; and from that time the two armies marched together, and the Emperor had no other dwelling than that of the King of France.

Two days after leaving the town of Laodicea, the army came to the foot of a high, steep mountain, and the king sent forward the Count de Maurienne and Geoffrey de Plancogne, with orders to occupy the crest of the mountain, and thus to secure the safety of the army. But, shame on these imprudent and disloyal knights! instead of obeying their prince, they went down the opposite side of the mountain, and planted the tents of the vanguard in the plain, and the Turks immediately fell upon the Christian battalions, which were peacefully defiling through the mountain passes. They sent upon us showers of arrows with too sure an aim, and horses, riders, and beasts of burden, rolling down the rocks, dragged with them into the abyss all that they met within their fall. The day was declining, and the gulf was being filled more and more with the remnants of our army. The infidels pursued us sword in hand; the central wing of the army, where the poor unarmed people had gathered, was furiously attacked, and the defenceless multitude fled like a flock of sheep. The King of France, like a faithful Christian and brave knight, hastened to throw himself into the thickest of the fight. Very soon separated from his escort and left alone, he abandoned his steed, and, seizing the branches of a tree, sprang to the top of a rock. A number of the enemy rushed upon him to make him prisoner, whilst others

shot their arrows at him from afar ; but, thanks be to God, his hauberk preserved him, and defending with his bloody sword the rock which served him as a refuge, he struck off the hands and the heads of several of his assailants. The latter, not knowing him, and seeing that it would be difficult to seize him, left him, to go and dispute for the spoils of the dead on the battle-field.

Pressed by numbers, alarmed by the night, disbanded, and wandering on the mountain-side, the army seemed lost. I found myself, with my lord, whose esquire I was, near the Reverend Grand Master of the Templars, who was named Evrard des Barres. It wrung my heart to see the rocks covered with the bodies of our comrades, and so many brave men given up to the chains of the infidels, like sheep to the knife of the butcher. It seemed to me that they might be saved, and, full of this thought, I approached my master and the brave Templar.

"What wouldst thou, Gilbert ?" said the Sire de Noyelles.

"My lord," answered I, "and you, valiant and most Reverend Grand Master, would you permit a poor man to tell you what God has put into his heart ?"

"Speak, my brother."

"Speak with confidence, Gilbert."

"Well, the army is lost if it continues to march without orders. Let the King of France, or my lord Thierry of Flanders, or thou, most noble lord, place himself at the head of these straggling bands ; let the leaders choose some lieutenants, who shall each have fifty men under his orders ; let these men

precede and flank the army ; let the men-at-arms who have lost their horses be formed into troops of archers to cover the rear-guard ; let us march as close and united as is the holy trefoil, and the infidels will retreat ! . . . Pardon my presumption, noble lord." . . .

"Pardon thee !" cried the Grand Master. "Blessed be God, who has put into thy mouth the counsel which must save the army ! Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, O Lord, and thou hast revealed them to the simple !"

"Gilbert's advice seems very wise," added the Lord of Noyelles ; "and, if thou thinkest it best, Reverend Grand Master, we shall go and communicate it to my lord the King. Follow us, Gilbert."

I accompanied them to the King's presence, and my lord disclosed to him the plan which I had conceived. The King clasped his hands and raised them to heaven, saying :

"Praise be to the Lord, our host shall be saved ! Gilbert, if I ever see the land of France again, thou shalt be free and rich !—Reverend Grand Master, I give thee command, save our brethren, and I will serve under thy orders as an esquire. Act, and may God guard thee !"

The Grand Master took the command, and he manœuvred with so much wisdom and prudence that the army was happily enabled to cross the defiles, and arrive at the town of Satalia, where it found provisions and rest. Glory be to God alone.*

* History records that a man named Gilbert, whose country and lineage were unknown, saved by his wise counsels the Christian army from the danger into which Geoffrey de Plancogne and the Count de Maurienne had thrown it.

This second crusade was not successful, and my memory, enfeebled by age, cannot recall all the incidents of it. Gradually the most powerful lords, discouraged by these continual defeats, returned to Europe; the army became more and more weakened. . . . I faithfully followed the fortunes of my lord, and with him I was enabled to accomplish the object of the holy pilgrimage and venerate the tomb of our Saviour. So many hardships were none too much for such a happiness.

I saw at Jerusalem the most illustrious Countess of Flanders, Sybille, devoted to the care of the poor and of lepers. Her lord and husband gave her to Jesus Christ in the poor, and, in exchange for his companion whom he left in Palestine, he brought back with him a drop of the divine blood, received of old by Joseph of Arimathea. We also returned to France. I came back as I went, poor and a serf. The King of France had forgotten his promise. The valiant Grand Master who had befriended me died sword in hand. My lord, whilst praising my services, and lauding the prudence and courage of Gilbert, did not wish to deprive his barony of a vassal. . . . I am what I was before. My children will be what I am. . . . May the will of God be praised! A soldier of the cross should not murmur!

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IX.

THE SERF—THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

How great are the miseries of this age ! O most sweet, most merciful Lord Jesus ! what have we done to thee that thou shouldst subject us to such slavery ! As men we are bound to the earth, we form part of the land on which we labor ; as soldiers, we never fight for our own cause ; as workmen, laborers, to others belong the fruit of our labors. Our lords weigh us down, as the millstone does the grain it grinds ; we find them everywhere ; there is no freedom anywhere ; everything is burdened with taxes, furniture, provisions, merchandise, land, and water. For the serf, the peasant, and even the burgher in the towns, toll at the gates, on the bridges, passing from one quarter to another ; rights on the harvests, profits, forced labor, collections for the benefit of the lord, exactions of all sorts. . . . We can only have our grinding done in our lords' mills ; we can only bake our bread in the common oven ; we cannot even marry without the consent of our master, who disposes of us as he disposes of his hounds, or of the horses in his stables, and if, by dint of our toil and savings, we leave when dying a few crowns or some furniture, the lord again can claim his share. Almost

all these lords seek to force from their vassals all that they can get ; our complaints are answered by blows or by jeers. " Jacques Bonhomme has a broad back, he can bear all ! " This is what the barons and their men-at-arms keep saying. . . . Shall not a day come when Jacques Bonhomme can show that he, too, has a strong hand and a free heart ?

However, we know how to fight : our vigorous arms use the pike and the axe, as they do the scythe and the hoe ; we have blood in our veins ; it boils in presence of the enemy ; and it is wrong, grievously wrong, that the knights, covered with their shirts of mail, mounted on their barbed steeds, treat us with disdain, we who advance first and without armor to meet the enemy. Foot soldiers, say they. Yes, foot soldiers who know how to fight and to die ! My grandfather, a brave squire, followed his master, Jean de Noyelles, to the crusades ; my father, the first bowman of the country, signalized himself at the battle of the Bridge of Bouvines, where he fought beside his lord, Rasse de Noyelles, grandson of Jean. But fortune turned her back on the Flemings that day ; Philippe, King of France, gained the victory, and made a prisoner of Count Ferrand, the husband of the Lady Jeanne of Flanders. I have heard it related by those who were present that the people of Paris sang a mocking song around the chariot in which Ferrand was borne :

" Quatres ferrants tres-bien ferrés
Trainent Ferrand bien enferré."*

Chained he was for twelve years. King Philippe

* " Four steeds well shod
Drag Ferrand well chained ! "

had honor and gain, and we an increase of misfortune. The Lord of Noyelles was also taken prisoner, and his goods confiscated to the profit of Galès de Montigny; but the King, who sought to take vengeance on the Flemings, ordered the serfs of the barony to be sent to other domains, and to be replaced by French subjects. My father, with his children, was forced to quit the country of his ancestors, and was transferred to Picardy, on the barony of Coucy, and here it is that we experience all the worst evils of slavery; here it is that I was born, and for forty years I have suffered, sweated, and toiled for my masters, and not for those of my blood and race. I took to wife a serf like myself, and every day I see her wearing away her blood and her life in ungrateful toil. My eldest daughter, married but a short time, was so brutally struck by my lord's master of the hounds that she died very soon after; my son, for having killed a rabbit-dog, passed twelve months, and then another twelve months, in the castle prison, and was only released at the entreaty of my lord's wife, who took pity on the poor people of her domain.

But kind as she is, she cannot do much, and we lived weighed down with taxes and payments, and subject to the harsh seignioral justice. Some amongst us, becoming desperate, have joined those bands which are called *Les Pastoureux*.* Perri-net, son of my neighbor Landry, has taken to the road with them.

About Easter, in the year 1351, an old man, with a long beard and pale, thin face, began to wander

* Shepherd boys.

round the country; young men, laborers, and especially shepherds, followed him eagerly, and, without consulting parents or masters, followed the footsteps of this man, whom they called the *Master of the Shepherd Boys*. He preached and said: "Heaven grants to the simplicity of the shepherds what it refuses to the pride of the knights, namely, to deliver the Holy Land, and avenge good King Louis on the infidels."

When, followed by his band, he passed through the towns and cities, it was like an army terrible to all, and there were neither bailiffs nor sheriffs who dared to oppose them. The master preached; but he preached hatred to the clergy; and the priests were sorrowful at seeing the people exposed to so great an error, and the complaints of the bishops at length reached the ears of Queen Blanche, the mother of King Louis. She had before received and well-treated the Master of the Shepherds; but, hearing the complaints of the clergy, she answered simply: "God knows I had hoped that these men would recover the Holy Land; but, since they are impostors, let them be excommunicated, pursued, and put to death." All these knaves were excommunicated, the master had his head cut off, and the main body of the shepherds, terrified at the death of their chief, dispersed without resistance, and were slaughtered here and there, like mad dogs, by the knights and men-at-arms.* Perrinet was never seen again; his poor mother died of a broken heart. So it was sorrow and bitter anguish everywhere.

* See Matthieu Paris and Guillaume de Nogés.

As for me, now I am old. I have lived in great poverty and tribulation, distressed at my own miseries and those of others; I have paid my debt in work and fighting, for, when I was young, I joined in the forty days' crusade against the heretics of Languedoc, called *Les Bons-Hommes*.* I saw there great feats of arms, and great horrors revolting to human nature. My lord followed the fortunes of the brave knight Simon de Montfort; and, at the battle of Muret, I saw that invincible man, courageous as Judas Machabeus, of whom the priests tell us, weep and lament at sight of the corpse of his enemy, King Peter of Aragon. These knights, these proud barons, have therefore a heart of flesh like our own. Alas! why does not that heart sometimes speak for us? . . . Amongst the great, one alone loves the poor; that is the king, King Louis; but he is away, and the lords and barons hold their iron hand over our heads. Ah! *Jacques Bonhomme*, man of service, man of labor, man who bears heat and cold, who, then, shall deliver thee? Lord Jesus Christ, take pity on thy poor people!

*Probably the Albigenses.



X.

THE SOLDIER OF CRECY—JACQUES BONHOMME—
FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

THIS account was written by Sister Gertrude, a religious in the Hôtel Dieu, at Amiens.

As far back in the past as my memory can reach, it recalls only ruin and disaster. My parents, poor serfs of the most powerful Count Enguerrand de Coucy, bore the heat and burden of the day; they labored and toiled all the year, from early morning even in the coldest weather, to pay the taxes and tolls; my father and brothers ploughed and did the carting for their lord; my mother and I sewed diligently, and still bread was scarce, fear very great, and the oppression continual. Sometimes my father told us that when his father lived, under the holy King Louis, times were better; that his grandfather, who had lived in Flanders under the reign of King Philip Augustus, had often repeated that in those times and those places life was most sweet; but as for me, I think that in the land of France the poor peasants and working people have always been in great distress, for happiness does not dwell with slavery.

I was only a little girl when a great commotion arose in the country in which we dwelt. It was said that the King of the English had crossed the

sen with a great naval force, with the flower of the barons and knights of England, and that they came to lay claim to the crown of France, then worn by our right and natural Lord Philip the Sixth, and which the King of England claimed because his mother was a princess of the French line. The poor people and the lords alike detested the thought that an Englishman should come to occupy the place of good King Louis, and reign over this fair and bountiful land of France, the first among Christian kingdoms. I remember that in the evenings, while stripping the hemp and spinning the flax, our good neighbors talked of the English as being like Turks and infidels. Therefore, when, in the year of Christ 1341, all the lords who held land summoned their vassals to join the host of the King of France, not one drew back! My father and my eldest brother Nicholas, who was surnamed *Grand Ferré*, followed the banner of the Lord de Coucy. They had so much the more heart in their enterprise because they knew well that the Black Prince, son of the English King, was burning and desolating everything on his way. Men-at-arms and citizens asked only for battle, and the King, who had established his headquarters at Saint Denis, wished for it more than any one. The forces of King Edward were in Picardy, and the King had taken up his quarters at Oisemont. Sad and melancholy as I have heard said, because he rightly judged that he would be shut in between the army of the King of France and the strong fortresses of Abbeville and Saint Valery. He wished much to pass the river Somme, and he brought thither some men belonging to the country,

offering them money if they would show him how to ford it. Then one of them, a cowardly, treacherous heart was he, showed him a passage called the White Ford, from the white pebbles and clay which formed the bottom of it. The King of England, as rejoiced as though he had been given twenty thousand crowns, immediately reached the White Ford, and his army crossed the river, notwithstanding the opposition of the Lord Godemar de Fay, a Norman baron, whose little troop was defeated and dispersed. The English established themselves amongst the woods of Crécy, in Ponthieu, and it was there that Philip's host came up with them. Alas! it was a pitiable sight, we are told, to see that army in poor array, wearied, harassed, having marched through a drenching rain and a terrible thunder-storm, and advancing towards the enemy with the setting sun in their eyes. The Genoese archers began the battle; but they were assailed by the darts and arrows of the English, which pierced their arms and heads; and when they sought to beat a retreat the knights trampled them under their horses' feet, crying: "Now, quick, slay this rabble, for they hinder our passage without reason!" Another blow; and it was pitiable.

My father and the *Grand Ferré* followed the banner of their lord, and tried to strike some blows with the axe and cutlass; they did their best, and sought to make their way to where they saw the banner of the Lilies wave (not the sacred oriflamme, which was never displayed against Christians). Now, our lord the King was in great peril of his life. His horse had just been struck

down by an arrow ; he had then but five barons and sixty men-at-arms around him, and his anguish of heart was great ; he persisted in remaining on the field. "Sire," said my Lord Enguerrand—"sire, come away, it is time ; do not throw your life away ; if you have lost this time, you will win another."

All was indeed lost : King Edward and his son were masters of the ground. My father, however, had seized by the bridle a riderless steed ; he brought it to King Philip and said to him : "Mount, sire, save the fortunes of France !" These words seemed to reanimate the King ; he got into the saddle, left the battle-field, covered with thousands of corpses, and went forth into the darkness, for it was night. My brother, the Grand Ferré, served him as guide, and brought him to the Castle of La Braye ; the gate was closed and the draw-bridge raised. They called for the master of the castle, who appeared on the battlements, and asked in a loud voice :

"Who is there ? Who knocks at this hour ?"

"Open, open, Castellan Knight," answered King Philip. "It is the unhappy King of France."

The gates were opened wide. They brought the King, at his request, wine with bread soaked therein. The King, his suite, and the Grand Ferré drank each in turn ; then the troop set out again, and my brother conducted the King and the barons to the gates of Amiens, where they found themselves in safety. The King wished to pay him, and gave him an angel.

Such was the battle of Crécy, the beginning of our miseries. Alas ! on that spot fell the flower of

the French chivalry: by which we must believe that God has sent these things for our sins, for there was then in France great pride of lineage, covetousness of riches, and indecency of clothing. It was no wonder that God sought to punish the misdeeds of the French by the scourges of his right hand. Thenceforth the English established themselves in France, and took, by famine, the city of Calais. The whole country trembled, as far as the river Loire; there were none to oppose the enemy, and the misfortunes of the people increased from day to day. King Philip died, and his son John increased the taxes and burdens which weighed upon the people. Eight farthings on the pound were paid on anything sold by all persons without distinction; and if these taxes and exactions weighed upon the noble and the rich, how much more should the poor peasants complain, who furnished to the lords the men and money requisite for the war! Twelve years passed thus in great misery and distress. The country was ruined, King John taken prisoner by the English after the battle of Poitiers, the kingdom given up to princes young in years and in experience, and wise and prudent men could only deplore the cross with which it pleased God to afflict our country. During these twelve years I lost my good mother. May God grant her rest!

I was then twenty-three years of age; but the flower of youth does not bloom for poor people, whose lot is the hard labor of the fields; and, besides, it had pleased God to turn towards his Divine Majesty my heart and my thoughts. Now, one day, as I was tending my flock in a large

meadow of green grass, watered by the Authie River, I saw approaching our young lord, Pierre de Coney. He advanced with a gay and playful air, his dogs jumping around him. I arose to salute him.

"Good day to thee, shepherdess," said he. "Dost belong to the barony?"

"Yes, my lord; I am Pierre Duchaisne's daughter."

"And a lovely girl, too!" answered he, jeering, and then he added a great many mocking words. My heart swelled, and it grieved me to hear this language, which it seemed to me was displeasing to God; but when the young lord stretched his arm towards me I fled across the meadow. He pursued me, and his hounds ran barking after me. . . . I was in great terror, and, recommending myself to God, the Blessed Virgin, and the holy Shepherdess Solange, I jumped into the river, and resolutely crossed it, the water being up to my shoulders. Oh! surely the most sweet Virgin assisted me in that hour.

My Lord Pierre watched me from the bank, angry and amazed, and his great hound, Fanfare, leaped into the water and swam towards me. . . . I hastened as much as I could. I heard his howls behind me, and I saw that my good dog, Pacifique, had followed me, and with one blow had thrown to the earth my lord's dog. I did not stop to look, and, running quickly through lanes and byways, I reached my father's house, and I carefully shut the door. My father came in just at dark, and he said to me:

"Daughter, thou canst go to bed."

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I willingly obeyed, for I was weary and sad, and I had slept for some hours when the sound of voices awoke me. It was near midnight, and I heard the matins ringing at the Abbey of Dommartin. They were speaking low, and amongst the confused voices I heard those of my father and brothers. Pacifique was howling in the yard, as if there was some one dead in the house.

Feeling uneasy, I arose. I went down-stairs, and looked in. A large fire was burning on the cottage hearth, and the red flames, like the fire of hell, lit up a numerous company seated at the table where we took our meals. My father and brothers, Nicholas, Jehannet, and Richard, were at the upper end, a number of our neighbors were there; there were Tristan, Cœur-Joyeux, Landry, Larcher, Vierron, Longue-Jambe, and others besides; but amongst them was a frightful figure, a man covered with a wolf-skin, and whose hairy hand resting on the table was handling a cutlass. . . . At this sight I crossed myself, and recommended myself to Saint Michael, the enemy of devils, and the prince of the heavenly hosts, and, reassured by the thought that nothing could happen to me without the permission of God, I watched and listened. My father was speaking.

"Is it agreed?" said he. "Are we all of the same opinion?"

"All!" answered the were-wolf. "We have suffered too much. Are we not of the same flesh as these proud lords, and should we fear a coat of mail? Besides, the men of all the Amienese villages, of Soissonais and Beauvais, are determined, and, by the cope of Saint Martin, there shall be fine sport."

"Jacques Bonhomme has suffered too much impatience!" cried Tristan. "The hour is come to show his teeth!"

"Our lords, who let themselves be taken at Poitiers, have levied their ransoms on our lands, and left us naked," said another.

"Companies of marauders have burned my farm. They killed my wife, whilst my lord, who saw the havoc from his castle, would not send a bolt against these miserable robbers."

"The lords did not do their duty at Crécy, nor at Poitiers," said the Grand Ferré gravely. "They acted without union, or obedience, or wisdom, and they have left the kingdom to the mercy of strangers."

"Let us hunt the lords! The Grand-Provost of Paris, Master Etienne Mareel, is already making war on them."

"Take heart, and we shall be masters in our turn," cried Longue-Jambe. "Lords and ladies shall work for us; it will be a great sight to see them out milking the cows and turning up the dunghill with their white hands. . . ."

"A truce to this!" said my father. "Let us deliver ourselves from servitude without oppressing others. To-morrow at the free fair, will you all be there?"

"All, by the Holy Cross!" cried they, the werewolf like the others.

"The pass-word?"

"Freedom!"

"Till to-morrow!"

They all went out, my father and brothers with them, and I remained half-fainting with terror. I

knew not what to do, alone and without advice. I dared not disclose it to any one, through fear of injuring my father and brothers, and I felt heart-broken, thinking that French blood, Christian blood, was about to flow again. I began to pray to God, and next morning and a part of the day following passed without my hearing human speech. Towards evening a neighbor came in, and said to me :

"Knowest thou the news, Catherine ?"

"No, Susanne ; I know nothing," answered I, trembling.

"Well, there has been great trouble at the free fair ; the peasants took up bows and clubs against the lords and their squires, and we are assured—I tell thee in confidence—that they have burned the castle and killed the lord."

"But who did it ?" asked I, in terror.

"Who ? Our men ! thy father at the head, and the Grand Ferré, and Richard, and Jehannet, and Warein, who became a wolf because the Lord de Treville outraged and killed his daughter, and many others ; without armor, with sticks and cutlasses, they have done wonders. Remember what I tell thee, Cateau, all the gentlemen will be exterminated."

"God forbid !" cried I ; "they are children of God like us."

"Thou shalt see ! thou shalt see ! and it will be well done. Jacques Bonhomme shows himself at last."

She went away, and I could cry at my ease, thinking of the danger in which my father and brothers were, and of the great rage which had been

enkindled against Christians. In a few days the revolt had spread through the whole country; a hundred thousand peasants had taken up arms; castles, fortresses, households, were given up to the flames; the nobles fled twenty leagues at the approach of the "Jacques"; matrons and maidens fled from fear of being ill-treated and murdered by wicked men; even little children, who had never done harm, were slain. These bands went through the country, ravaging and spreading ruin and desolation all along their way. I learned, however, that my father, who was a just man, contented himself with fighting for his freedom; the Grand Ferré, in the encounters with the knights and townsmen of Beauvais, did wonders; his axe hewed down men, as it had formerly hewed down the forest trees, and in one of these engagements he saved a poor, unhappy lady, who with her little children was fleeing from her burning castle.

Our poor Jehannet perished at the attack on the town of Meaux, made by the Jacques, reinforced by a small force sent from Paris to their aid by Master Marcel. The distress was great. This attack was repulsed, and the defeated peasants were either massacred by the sword or thrown into the Marne. This was a fatal blow to the Jacques party, and my father and brothers, seeing that nothing could be done in the vicinity of Paris, returned to Picardy.

The De Coucy domain was ravaged as though an army of infidels had passed through it; and, one night as I watched, I saw the flames arise from the high towers of the ancient manor. At the same moment, a knock came at the door; I opened it;

it was the Grand Ferré; he was pale, and blood was flowing from a great wound in his head.

"Alas!" said I, "what has befallen thee?"

"Sister," said he "give me thy arm; . . . the blood is blinding me." . . . I led him to the fireside, he sat down, and recovered his breath.

"I am done for," said he at length; "but, thanks to Heaven, it was against the English. We were entrenched in a little fort, near the Abbey of Saint Cornille, when the English attacked us, but with my good axe I have put them past doing any harm. . . . I killed forty, sister."*

Whilst speaking, he recovered a little strength; but a moment after the pallor of his face and the oppression of his poor chest showed that the hand of God was upon him. He could not speak, but he prayed in a whisper; for he had great devotion to the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, and he fell asleep. Confused noises came from afar; my heart was as if held in a vice; I felt death around me. . . . The noise came nearer; hurried steps were heard in the path on the dry leaves, and a quick knock at the door. . . . I again opened it, and a man rushed into the house.

"If you are Christians," cried he, "give me shelter! I recognized him, and I pushed him into the stable, and closed the door on him; it was my Lord Pierre de Coucy. Nicholas woke up, but, seeing no one, he thought he had been dreaming, and fell asleep again. I made the sign of the cross, and

* "*Histoire Chronique*" de Nangis.

went into the stable; the proud lord was there, leaning against the cow rack; he was pale, and scarcely able to stand; his velvet clothes soiled, muddy, and blood-stained.

"Thou hast saved me," said he; "the Jacques were on my track; . . . I should have been cruelly put to death but for thy noble charity; but there they are; . . . they are knocking at the door. . . . If they come, I can die like a knight!"

"Recommend yourself to God and do not fear," said I to him, "thy blood shall not be shed on the threshold of our door."

I went out! it was indeed the Jacques, armed to the teeth. God gave me great courage.

"Why," said I to them—"why do ye disturb the rest of the Grand Ferré, who has borne himself so valiantly amongst ye. He is sleeping! See!"

They saw my brother dying at the fireside, and retired in silence. Only one of them offered to go and bring a monk from Dommartin. I accepted the offer. . . . Nicholas was fighting against death, and prostrate on the floor I prayed God to spare him for some hours. At dawn, the monk came and reconciled my poor brother with his God. I saw him die. . . . O God! how full is our life of bitterness.

I left in the monk's care my Lord Pierre, who was still concealed in the stable. They departed, and I remained alone for the burial of my poor brother. From all sides came bad tidings; the Jacques were defeated and hunted like wolves. The King of Navarre, aided by the Count de Saint

Pol, had, it was said, killed three thousand of them; and I was told that my father had been taken, and was to be hung in the town of Montdidier, to serve as a warning and an example. At this news I had but one thought—to save my father from the executioner's hands, and to go and ask his pardon, were I to wear my legs off. I left my brother's body in charge of a neighbor, and I hastened to the Abbey of Dommartin, whither I knew that my Lord de Coucy and the ladies of his house had retired. In my heart I had no terror; my great sorrow took away all fear and apprehension; and when I arrived I boldly demanded to be led to the presence of the lords and ladies. I was led to the guest-chambers, and I found my Lord Enguerrand de Coucy and my Lord Pierre fully armed, and the young ladies sad and sorrowful. I went in fearlessly; I went towards my Lord Pierre; I threw myself on my knees before him, saying:

"Thou didst promise to grant me a grace; I come to claim it now. . . . Pardon, pardon for my father!"

"What!" cried he, "it is my good hostess—she who saved me from the Jacques, and (he looked at me closely) it is the beautiful shepherdess." . . .

"Yes," said I, "I am that unhappy creature! Pardon, my lord, pardon for my father, who is going to be hung!"

"And who is your father, my child?" asked my Lord Enguerrand.

"One of your vassals, my lord, Jacques Duchaisne, the Grand Ferré's father. . . ."

My lord turned sorrowfully away; the young ladies looked at me with tears in their eyes; and as

I persisted in dragging myself along on my knees, my Lord Enguerrand said in a tone of grief :

"I wish it were in my power to restore you your father ; but, my poor girl, the executioner has done his work ; and this morning your father has payed the debt which we all must one day pay. . . . If I had known that you had saved my son, I would have asked life for life. . . ."

He spoke ; but I heard no more. . . . I was almost dead with sorrow ; . . . the young ladies spoke to me gently ; they made me lie down in a beautiful bed, hung with curtains ; but for many days and many nights I had a malignant fever, during which I saw around my pillow either gibbets, to which were hung old men in agony, or the pale face of my brother, dying by the hearth of our home, or the were-wolf extending his hairy hands to seize me, or my Lord Pierre standing in the stable, and myself buried in the waters of the Authie, and struggling without power to save myself. . . .

When I was better, my Lord Enguerrand and the Lady de Coucy sent for me to come to them ; they spoke kindly, and my lord said to me :

"Catherine, I owe my son's life to thee ; thou art good and virtuous ; I wish to make thee forget thy misfortunes ! I will free thee, and give thee in marriage to my Esquire Toussaint de Charny ; thou shalt bring him for thy portion the lands which thy father rented. Art thou content?"

"My lord," answered I, "I bless God for the kindness which he has put into thy heart ; but I have but one favor to ask from thy goodness : Let me enter religion, that I may be the servant and

sponse of our Saviour Jesus Christ. That is all I wish for in the world."

"Thy desire shall be accomplished," said the Lady de Coney; "and thou, Catherine, wilt pray for us."

"The goods which thou dost refuse, Catherine," added my lord, "I will give to thy brother Richard. I found him in prison, and I have become his security. From this day forth he is entirely free."

I kissed my lord's hand, as happy as I could henceforth be. I entered the Hôtel Dieu at Amiens, the religious of which were in great renown for piety and virtue; for during the Black Plague they had tended the sick with gentleness and humility, exposing their lives without thinking of worldly glory, and I, though unworthy, was received amongst them. I made my profession under the name of Sister Gertrude. My brother Richard is now a burgher of this same town of Amiens. There is still great misery in the land of France: the English are the rulers; rich and poor, nobles and serfs, are oppressed, and we expect from God alone deliverance from so many evils.

Our old sisters sometimes repeat the prophecy of Merlin, who foretold that a virgin, from the marshes of Champagne, would save France. O Queen of Virgins! pray that it may be so, and deliver this poor people who hope in thee.

Written in the ninth year of the reign of Charles V., whom may God guard.



XI.

THE CITIZEN—FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

My grandfather, Richard Duchaisne, being honorably endowed with the goods of this earth, had no difficulty in obtaining from the good city of Amiens the right of citizenship; and, as he had learned in youth the trade of blacksmith, he desired to establish himself and to found a house. Therefore he sold to the Lord Toussaint de Charny the goods with which my Lord de Coucy had endowed him, and with the proceeds he fitted up a fine blacksmith's shop, being first, however, admitted into the honorable corporation of workers in iron, after having made, as proofs of his skill in the craft, a ploughshare, a chimney-piece bearing the arms of the good city, and some fire-arms. He was received; and, a short time after, he took to wife Agnes Damaze, the daughter of the Syndic of the corporation, who was the mother of my most honored father. They lived long years in peace, and are now lying together in the Church of Saint Rémy under the blue flag, near the baptismal fonts.

Often, in the winter evenings, I curiously enquired of my grandfather, Master Damaze, as to the origin of this corporation of Amiens, so noted for its privileges, and for the great freedom granted to

it by its lords ; and this is what he told me, having learned it himself from his fathers, and by the reading of some charters, which, from his office of Syndic and Magistrate of the town, he had frequently had in his hands.

It was in the year of the Incarnation 1113 ; the ancient and celebrated city of Amiens had then for its bishop and lord Geoffrey, a man of high lineage, and full of zeal for religion and virtue. He dearly loved the people, and he wished every one to have freedom, and protection for his person and property. He readily yielded to the request of the burghers, and granted them a municipal government and laws full of wisdom and justice. But the good bishop was not the only lord of the city. Three powerful lay lords shared with him the sovereignty, and these latter were neither as mild nor as clement as was the man of God. One of them, Count Enguerrand de Boves, sent against the town his whole force of knights and archers ; he sought to become its sole master, and, in this impious war, the good Bishop Geoffrey's goods were not spared. The cruel Enguerrand and his son, Thomas de Marle, dishonored their faith and their knightly fame in oppressing the weak, killing the defenceless, and carrying fire even to the monasteries and the holy churches. Great distress was in all the country, and the good bishop, seeing the misery of his people, distrusted himself. He sent his pastoral staff and ring to the Bishop of Rheims, and wished to retire to the Chartreux in the diocese of Grenoble. The then reigning king, Louis the Fat, urged by the entreaties of the clergy, who brought under his notice the grievances of the people, took up arms

against Thomas de Marle, and chastised the audacity of the fierce baron. The Lord King entered Amiens at the head of his army, and by his presence revived the hopes of the citizens. By his side, Bishop Geoffrey, whose heart was with his flock, knelt in prayer at the tomb of St. Acheul, whilst the citizens with the royal troops went to attack Chatillon, a little fort overlooking the town, and commanded by one of the four allied lords, named Adam. Even the women bore themselves with great courage in the attack on the fortress. The king received an arrow in his hauberk, and the fort was only taken after a blockade of two years. Therefore, to found this corporation, to give liberty to our fathers, and to oppose successfully those terrible lords, who were alike enemies of the sovereign and of the people, it required the concurrence of a holy bishop, placed by our Mother the Universal Church in the ranks of the blessed, of a just and courageous king, and of the citizens of this great city. The liberty which we enjoy has been purchased with much bloodshed, and with many hardships; we should respect it, then, as the richest inheritance which our fathers could have left to their children, and eternally praise the great God, whose mercy has drawn us, as the children of Israel, out of the house of bondage, and from under the yoke of captivity.

Still, our fathers and ourselves have also known evil days. Who can tell what hardships the presence of the English has imposed upon us? O unexampled misery! since the day when the gentle King Charles lost his reason, there has been no peace in the kingdom of France. A civil war

broke out between the Burgundians and the Armagnacs.

The English took advantage of the dissensions in the royal council, the want of union and harmony between the king's uncles, to invade once more this kingdom, which they had coveted for more than sixty years; and then was seen, horrible to think, a mother, a queen, deposing her son and the heir of so many kings, in favor of a foreign prince, an enemy to the race and to the country of France! Paris and all the cities of the kingdom were exhausted in their finances, ruined by taxes and subsidies, overwhelmed with distress. Epidemics, severe cold, famine, decay of industry and commerce, all combined to ruin and harass the people; in those times were seen on the highways and in the streets scores of little children, crying out, "I am starving," and hard was the heart that would not pity them, but the poor householders could not help them; for there was in the good towns neither wheat, nor bread, nor wood, nor coal, and the taxes, exactions of all kinds, rained down like hail from hell.

The most Christian king fared no better than his subjects. He was poorly and humbly served in the Hôtel de Saint Pol, with few attendants, with the exception of old followers, and but little state. During this time, at the Louvre the English King, Henry, was displaying great pomp and pageantry, as though he were king of the whole world, a thing which was grievously displeasing to the hearts of all true Frenchmen. The laborers were still more unfortunate than the citizens; robbed, ruined, oppressed, they left their wives and children, saying,

"Let everything go to the devil; little we care what becomes of us!" and they became robbers in the woods, and recruited companies of brigands. The poor king passed from life to death, and the popular sorrow was increased, in seeing, O pitiable sight! the funeral of the King of France headed by an Englishman, the sword of the King of France borne before Englishmen, and the people with sighs and lamentations cried, as they followed the coffin of King Charles VI: "O dearest prince! we shall never see thee again; we shall have nothing but wars, since thou has left us. Thou art gone to thy rest, and we live in tribulation and sorrow."

My grandfather had seen King Charles the V., called the Wise, and his son and successor Charles VI.; my father lived under the gentle dauphin, who was called Charles VII., surnamed the Victorious, and many a time he told us children how the kingdom of the Lilies was recovered by an humble and simple shepherdess, who would rather have spun beside her mother, but who saved the kingdom of France, because God willed it! and because Saint Louis and Charlemagne were kneeling before the throne of God, praying for their successors!* It was marvellous how she bore herself in her position, and how grandly and impressively she spoke, whilst in all other things she was the most simple shepherdess that ever was! But a man was found, I say it to the honor of the third estate or burghers, who by natural and human means aided in preserving the state which Jeanne had recovered. This man was called Jacques Cœur;

* "*Prolés de la Pucelle*"—"Trial of the Maid of Orleans."

and a cousin of mine, my mother's nephew, who was long employed in the counting-house of a rich merchant of Bourges, told us wonderful tales of him.

At that time, King Charles VII. had already recovered a part of his kingdom from the English. But he needed Parisian coins or royal money to drive them finally from Normandy. Then came a man of *low lineage*, as the lords expressed it, who uttered these noble words :

"Sire, what I have is yours !"

The King, who at the time had neither goods nor means, requested him to lend him some money to carry on the war in Normandy, and Jacques Cœur collected for him four hundred thousand pounds.* The soldiers were paid, and did their duty so well that the English, baffled and discomfited, were obliged to depart from the kingdom of France. To offer such a sum to his lord had been no easy matter for Jacques ; according to the account of my cousin Norbert Damaze, a reliable man, he owned seven ships, with which he carried on an immense trade, sending to other countries the wines, fruits, and grains from the fertile land of France, the camelots and other stuffs, the works of our artisans in iron and copper, and bringing in return spices, medicinal drugs, balms, perfumes, wax, honey, glassware, gilt leather, silks, and metals, which come to us from other climes. He was the owner of mines of copper and lead, master of the mint, silversmith to the King of France. Abundantly rich, perhaps too much so, he had

* About sixteen millions of francs.

built at Bourges the most beautiful house in France, in which he showed little wisdom; he possessed twenty-two lordships, which were the cause of great trouble to him; he rendered to the country and to the king most glorious services, which provoked the wrath of the wicked. And yet was the silversmith less deserving than the lords, the Dunois, the La Hires, the Xaintrailles! Poor Jacques Cœur was accused to our lord the King,* imprisoned, stripped of his goods, and condemned to make restitution. But in this extremity he found love and loyalty amongst his clerks and sales men, assisted them with their savings, and furnished him with the means of reaching the Papal territory. Pope Calixtus III. honored this great and generous man, and gave him command of the fleet which he was arming against the Turks; but Jacques, overwhelmed with grief, died in the Isle of Scio. May God grant peace to his soul, good and loyal as he was in all things, and a great honor to the burgher race from which he sprang!

* Jacques Cœur was accused of having impoverished the country by exporting copper to the infidels, and if he did export copper it was in exchange for Egyptian gold; of having altered the money for his own benefit, whilst it was he who had established order in the monetary systems: of having sent arms to the Turks, and it was proved that these arms were presents from Charles VII. to the Sultan of Egypt; of having restored to his Mussulman master a Christian slave who had taken refuge on board one of his vessels—the promise of not taking away slaves was one of the express conditions of commercial intercourse with the Levant, and Jacques Cœur was obliged to submit to it. The clergy nobly espoused the silversmith's cause; Pope Nicholas V. wrote to the King in favor of the accused, and the Church showed herself once more the protectors of innocence and genius.

As for us, we have lived in more peaceful days than those of our fathers. Louis the Eleventh reigns undisputed over the land of France, having no other enemy to fear than the fiery and irritable Duke of Burgundy, last male heir of that powerful line, an offshoot of the French Lilies. In the beginning of his reign much trouble was made by the great vassals on pretence of the public good, but the King's great wisdom extricated him from this dilemma. He was gradually seen striking down all the branches of the feudal tree which eclipsed the majesty of the crown, and sought support from the men of low degree, in whom he found goodwill, wisdom, and loyalty. Often have I seen that King, perfectly simple, clad in a short coat, with an old doublet of gray fustian, a felt hat, and a modest chaplet of medals, despising the vain magnificence with which the great of the earth usually are attired, keeping no greater state than when he was the poor exiled dauphin at Genappe, and reserving the fruits of his savings for more useful things. Of the pleasures of kings and great lords he had a fondness for one only, the chase, and this he kept for himself alone by edicts so harsh and so rigorous that it was a less crime to kill a man than a boar or stag.

Our beautiful province of Picardy, the ancient appanage of our kings, was more than any other the prey of my Lord of Burgundy, who wished to recover possession of the Picardian towns, formerly delivered to his house by traitors. My eldest daughter, Beatrice, who was married to Master Ange Galily, a scrivener of Beauvais, oftentimes related the marvels and the feats of the siege of that city, and

the magnanimous virtue displayed by the citizens, who defended at the same time, against the terrible Duke of Burgundy, their goods, their honor, their lives, and the frontiers of the kingdom of France. It was in the year 1472. . . . The Duke of Burgundy rode himself at the head of his army, which was formidable and imposing to see, but the citizens were not afraid. The company of archers did wonders; the women and young girls had assembled at the shrine of the Blessed Saint Angadresme, patroness of the city.* But they did not confine their efforts to prayer and lamentation; they mounted the ramparts, carrying to the defenders of the city supplies, provisions, cordials; and, moreover, they aided in the righteous defence of their city, rolling great stones down upon their assailants, and pouring upon their heads boiling water and oil. In vain did the enemy several times attempt to scale the ramparts; they were always repulsed. . . . The women and maidens (and, thanks be to Heaven, my daughter showed that she came of a good stock) cried, "Saint Angadresme to our aid!" and they threw the cruel Burgundians into the ditches below.

A simple and modest maiden of Beauvais, named Jeanne Fourquet, made herself remarkable. She snatched from the hands of a Burgundian standard-bearer the banner which he was about to plant on the walls, and as she made use of a small axe she

* Saint Angadresme was the daughter of Robert, Keeper of the Seals to Clotaire; from her childhood she consecrated herself to retirement and to the service of God, and received the veil from the hands of Saint Owen. She died in the year 603.

and her descendants have borne the surname of *Hachette*, which is still dear to the memory of the people of Beauvais. One of the gates of the town had been forced in by blows of the culverin; the Burgundians rushed forward to enter through this opening, but the courage of the citizens increased at sight of such great peril; they heaped together wood, pitch, and pots of oil behind the broken gate, they set fire to it, and opposed to the enemy, for want of a rampart of stones, a rampart of unceasing flames, kept up by beams and planks from the neighboring houses. The enemy retreated, and after twelve hours' siege and combat the citizens were reinforced by companies of artillery, bowmen, and guards, come from Amiens, from Senlis, from Paris, and from Upper Normandy, for in such circumstances brother does not abandon brother, the fingers of the hand aid each other, and, when one good town suffers, all the others are pained and sorrowful.

Before many days had passed there were so many men in the town that they would have sufficed to defend not only one wall, but the hedge of a field.* The siege lasted a month all but five days, and, full of rage, Duke Charles was compelled to decide on retreating without trumpets, repulsed by the citizens, who had saved their honor and the welfare of the kingdom. King Louis was grateful: he granted to the citizens of his good town of Beauvais the right of holding noble fiefs, without paying taxes or being held to militia service, the free election of the mayor and of the members of their corporation,

* Expressions de Commynes.

and the right of assembling in the houses of citizens to deliberate on their common interest; he exempted them from the poll-tax, and various others, he enjoined the establishment of a solemn procession every year, and commanded that the brave women of Beauvais should henceforth march in front of the men at the above-mentioned procession of Saint Angadresme, and he dispensed these honorable women from all the sumptuary laws respecting their garments, rings, and jewelry.

Five years after, the fierce Duke of Burgundy perished, as was supposed, at the battle of Nancy, under the blows of the Swiss peasants, by whom, twice before, he had been shamefully and entirely vanquished. The crafty Louis had often said "that he knew no better means of avenging himself on Charles than to let him throw himself against the Germans,"* and the event showed how clear-sighted was the King of France.

At the time of my Lord of Burgundy's death, he had just promised to aid and support King Edward of England, in recovering the kingdom of France. But God delivered us from such calamities. He permitted that the rich and glorious house of Burgundy, which had been honored far and near, perished miserably in the person of Charles, who left no male heirs, and that gradually, by wars and by treaties, the crown of France recovered its rights over so many duchies and earldoms, so many lordships, which had been held by the heirs of Philip the Bold, to the great detriment of the kingdom of the Lilies.

* See Commynes.

Whatever were the sufferings which the populace still endured by the raising of taxes and increase of tolls, considering the times of our fathers we should esteem ourselves fortunate. The King has at heart great good-will for us; he favors commerce and traffic by land and sea; he grants great freedom to many towns; in fine, he loves those who are the life of the state, and they in their turn ought to cherish him. May God grant him long life—for he is anxious to live—to him and to his posterity!

I shall not see his royal descendants reigning and flourishing; I am old; my children, praise be to God, are honorably settled; one of them, Augustine, is a goldsmith, and excels in his craft; the second, Tabian, a scrivener and compiler of rubrics, has quitted our city of Amiens to settle in Paris, where he dwells not far from the Church of Saint Jacques-de-la-Boucherie; Beatrice, my daughter, is happy and much esteemed in her town of Beauvais; Françoise, my youngest child, left us to devote herself to the service of God in the austere Order of the Poor Clares. Thus families are scattered according to the will of Almighty God. I did what I could for my children, first in teaching them to love and serve God, then in instructing them according to their state and condition.

All of them know how to read and write; they are not obliged to put for seal or signatures, at the bottom of documents or letters, a tool of their trade—the blacksmith, his hammer; the carpenter, his plane; the mason, his trowel.* . . .

* We have seen many documents and letters of mechanics signed with barbarous and uncouth marks, representing the

I hold a little knowledge good in all conditions : I think this opinion is gaining more and more, and that it soon will be a disgrace for any one not to know how to read, either for amusement or necessity.

tools of their craft, as the signature. It was the plebeian coat-of-arms. Mr. Gentil Destamps, at Lille, has many papers thus signed in his valuable collection.



XII.

CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT—SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

I, THE great-grandson of that Ambrose Duchaisne who esteemed knowledge so highly, and the grandson of Master Fabian, the compiler, have added some notes to those which my fathers (may their souls rest with God !) have laboriously traced. We live in strange times, and all around us is dissension of minds, discord, and malice. Often have I heard said by church people, "There must be heresies." Bitter necessity of our condition on earth, where we can neither have peace nor rest ; for to enumerate the streams of blood which heresies have caused to flow is something impossible. In the last century, as I have heard related by the Bohemian and Hungarian students who come to seek knowledge at the University of Paris, Germany was harassed by the cruel wars of John Ziska and his followers, the offspring of the damnable heresy of John Huss ; and in the beginning of this century, under King Francis I., it was again from Germany that the ever-to-be-lamented error of Luther came to us. Revolt against God and against the powers of the earth is all that

was brought to us by the disciples of Luther, of Zwinglius, and of Calvin.

"What is God?" asked the good King Saint Louis of the Sire de Joinville.

"God," answered he, "is something so good that there can be nothing better."

"Truly," said the holy King, "you have answered well. But if we ask of heretics, 'What is your God?' they would answer thus, it would seem: 'Something so bad that worse there cannot be; for he punishes us for evils which we cannot avoid, and for evil that he himself works in us.' And in truth, their God, if he resembles them, is not the God who reigns in heaven. But through divine grace the kingdom of France, though much imperilled, has remained Catholic; although at the head of the Huguenots were seen gentlemen, lords, and even degenerate sons of Saint Louis, the citizens of the towns, the good people of the country were faithful, and have not permitted the kingdom of the Lilies to lose the renown of its ancient integrity. But, as the kingdom suffered, each family had to pay some tribute to the public misfortunes, and there were few who had not to mourn the defection of some of their children.

There were three brothers of us, Claude, François, and myself, who was named Thibaut. We were in the flower of youth just at the time when the religious disputes reached their height. The young King Charles the Ninth was a minor, under the regency of Queen Catherine, and it was whispered, amongst us citizens of Paris, that the innovations meet with great success at court. Michel de l'Hôpital, then Chancellor of the realm, was a

very doubtful Catholic, and his wife and all his family were Protestants; the Prince of Condé, an obstinate Huguenot, was one of the King's council; Gaspar de Coligny seemed to have the confidence of the Queen Regent, to whom he pointed out the possessions of the clergy as an easy prey with which to fill the void in the royal treasury. Antoine de Bourbon, King of Navarre, who was also a Huguenot, had just been appointed lieutenant-general of the kingdom; the foreign worship was practised even in the royal palace of the Louvre, and on weak minds these examples gradually exercised a fatal influence. The youngest of my brothers, François, had profited little by the virtuous examples of those gone before. He was a young man of fiery temper, opposed to restraint, an enemy to work, and whose inclinations deeply grieved our worthy and honored mother. Even on her deathbed it troubled her, and she prayed to the sweet Jesus and the Blessed Virgin for her poor François. Alas! if she could have foreseen the future, with what bitterness of heart she would have left the earth! We soon perceived that our brother shunned our society, and neglected the trade of goldsmith in which we were all employed, my eldest brother being the master, and we working as his aids and assistants, whilst we waited to be received as masters. We learned that François had appeared at Protestant sermons, which were then delivered in various parts of the city, and that he had even partaken of the Lord's Supper with them. It was Holy Thursday. My brother Claude, a man of great virtue and of eminent piety, had passed his day in the churches before the sacrament of the altar; I had just come down

from the workshop, where I had given the last rub of the polishing-iron to a chalice ordered for Easter Sunday by the curé of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois; our old Aunt Marthe had set the table for the collation, and, whilst awaiting our coming, she stitched away at clothing destined for the poor of the parish, for she was the almoner, and was very zealous in seeking out the unfortunate. We were waiting for François, when the door of the backshop opened, and he entered abruptly. Looking at the table, with a defiant air, he said shortly:

"Is that all the supper?"

Now, the supper, according to custom in Lent and penitential times, consisted of dried fruits and of last year's apples; and, certainly, it was a wedding-feast compared to the privations of so many religious in their cloisters, who, on so memorable a day, eat nothing but bread and water; and still more the Fathers of Saint Bernard, founded by Jean de la Barrière, ate this bread on their knees, and drank the water from skulls, which they used instead of cups and glasses.

"Eh! is it not Lent?" said Aunt Marthe gently, "and could we use any other food?"

"Those are superstitions taught by the priests," cried François, "and I no longer pretend to conform to them."

So saying, he sat down, drew from under his cloak some slices of salt meat, and began to eat.

"Brother, what are you doing?" cried Claude.

"You are outrageously violating the precepts of the Church, and I shall not suffer it in my presence, under the roof which sheltered our worthy parents."

"I no longer recognize your Church, nor the

laws which make slaves of men ! I am a man, I am free, and to all three of you I declare that I have abjured it, and that henceforth I belong to the Communion of Calvin."

"O wretched boy !" cried my aunt.

"Brother, retract your words," said Claude : "such treason is not possible. The son of our virtuous parents cannot be an apostate."

"I am not an apostate, but a reformer," answered François ; "the jargon of priests, monks, and devotees has no more influence over me. I belong to the free worship, in which each man is to himself his own church and his own light."

"Poor deluded boy ! do you assume that your single and feeble judgment is wiser than the Church founded by Jesus Christ, and confirmed by sixteen centuries of persecution and triumph ? Do not quit the fold, my brother ; the sheep who stray from it are lost ! It is pride which causes you to follow the common way, and to embrace these novelties ; it is pride which invites you to join a wandering flock, beguiled into the way of perdition, rather than remain a disciple in the school of truth, letting yourself be led by the hand of the pastors in the right way. Renounce the spirit of falsehood, O my dear brother ! and be submissive in order to be saved."

"That is enough of preaching, brother Claude," replied François : "your words are as idle as the drifting snow. It is a thing decided upon, done, and consummated. I am a Calvinist, and in spite of all you can say, to-morrow I depart with the followers of the Prince of Condé."

These words filled us with consternation ; poor

Aunt Marthe knelt down before François ; my brother and I implored him ; all was useless ; the child of perdition left our dwelling, and we soon learned that, renouncing his faith, as he had renounced the honorable employment of his fathers, he had enlisted amongst impious German foot-soldiers and other profligates, whom the Prince of Condé kept in his retinue. This was for us the subject of great affliction, and shame amongst our neighbors and associates, for it was well known what fidelity the tradespeople of Paris had shown towards the Holy See and the good and ancient religion. My brother Claude especially took this grief to heart, and became more than ever assiduous in prayer, meditation, the offices of the Church, and in practices of austere penance, and his design became but too apparent. At length he disclosed it, and told us, with mingled gentleness and firmness, that he had resolved to leave the world, to serve God in the religious life, and that he had chosen the Order of Capuchins, as being one of the poorest and most penitential that could be found.

"We must make reparation for that poor unfortunate," said he to me, "that the wrath of God may not come down upon him. I willingly offer myself to the Divine Majesty to obtain mercy for our unhappy brother."

A few days after this conversation, my worthy brother set out for Angoumois, where he was, according to the will of his superiors, to enter the Novitiate of the Capuchin Brothers in the city of Angoulême. I bitterly lamented his departure, deploring the fatal innovations which had thus separated, from such different motives, three bro-

thers who had been from childhood so closely united, and living in such intimacy and confidence that it had seemed that death alone could have sundered so strong an alliance; and, in regretting my saintly brother Claude, I still wept for the fall of the unfortunate François.

Public affairs were occupying every mind. The Prince of Condé had thrown off the mask, and openly manifested his design of supporting the new religion by force of arms; Gaspar de Coligny joined him; and, at the head of the Huguenot army, they surprised the city of Orleans, which they made their headquarters, after having, however, plundered the Catholic churches and confiscated the Church goods—that is to say, the patrimony of the poor. The sectaries of Calvin thought themselves then superior to their adversaries; they assembled tumultuously, and, in the towns where they were numerous, they seized upon the churches, profaned the holy altars, and inflicted most frightful tortures upon the priests and the faithful. Such rumors of their cruelty went abroad as filled all honest hearts with horror; never had the land of France been afflicted by so many sacrileges, nor by so much barbarity.

In this interval, I received a letter from my brother Claude, which I insert here. He wrote:

“ANGOULEME, June 25, 1562.

“PEACE BE WITH YOU!”

“BELOVED BROTHER:

“It has pleased the Lord to try us by great calamities since I last wrote to you. You have perhaps heard that this city of Angoulême, besieged by the Huguenots, has at last fallen into their hands:

they seized upon the gates of the city, and have ravaged and despoiled all the places consecrated to the Lord, although a treaty, confirmed by oath, secured to priests and faithful Catholics the free exercise of their religion. The houses and persons belonging to our holy order have not been spared, and the Lord has permitted, for his greater glory, that many among us resisted even unto blood. Perhaps it may be agreeable to you to know the names and deeds of the new confessors. Therefore, I will cite Brother Grellet, Superior of the Convent of St. Francis, in this city, who, from hatred to the true religion, was hung and strangled on the gallows, before the eyes of Gaspar de Coligny, the chief of these rebels. Ready to appear before God, with the cord already around his neck, this courageous priest predicted to Coligny a terrible and bloody end. . . . May God avert from him this prophecy, and have mercy on that poor sinner ! Brother Jean Viroleau, reader of the same monastery, was inhumanly massacred by the heretics, as also an old man of eighty, Brother Jean Avril, who was beheaded ! A learned doctor of theology, Brother Pierre Boumeau, also gave his blood and his life for the same holy cause. The Huguenots took, and shut up in a house belonging to a citizen of the town, named Papin, thirty Catholics, whom they put to death by various tortures. Some died by starvation, others were sawed in two, others burned at a slow fire—horrible cruelties, which are repulsive to the natural gentleness of our nation. A wealthy magistrate, Messire Jean Arnold, was strangled, after having undergone various tortures ; a widow, who was venerable alike

from her age and virtue, fell into the hands of these ruffians, who would not respect the old age of their mother, and was dragged through the streets and put to death. Another Catholic lady, having given hospitality to some Huguenot soldiers, was burned in her own house ; a saintly priest, in the vicinity of Angoulême, was scalded with boiling oil, and pierced with dagger strokes.* Heaven is filled with our holy confessors ; but how disgraceful to the land of France is such barbarity ! Our enemies and murderers are distinguished from us by no apparent sign, neither of language nor of bearing ; they have the same laws, manners, and even air. . . . Alas ! they are of the same blood and the same race ! . . . I have learned that our brother François is with the impious band which has filled our city with blood and carnage ; I endeavored to see him, urged by the natural friendship of a brother and by the holy affection of a Christian ; but he avoided me, and has left the city. . . . Night and day I besiege Heaven with my prayers for this lost sheep of the flock ; I invoke in his behalf the martyrs of our own time, whose blood has been shed by him and his ; that blood is always beneath the altar, crying out ; but, like that of the most sweet Jesus, it cries for mercy and not for vengeance ! Pray, also, Brother Thibaut, for our Holy Mother Church, for our native land of France, for François, and for me, a miserable sinner, who am and always will be, in our Lord,

“Your affectionate brother,

“BROTHER CLAUDE,

Unworthy Religious of the Order of St. Francis.”

* “*Théâtre des Cruautés des Hérétiques*,” page 32.

This letter only confirmed so much fatal news. The battle of Dreux, gained by the Duke of Guise over the Prince of Condé, somewhat consoled the hearts of the Catholics; but soon the murder of that hero, assassinated by Jean Poltrot, at the instigation, as it was thought, of Gaspar de Coligny, marred the general joy. We passed long years thus in civil discord and uproar, war by land and sea, pillage, cruelty, and heavy state troubles, the hatred between Catholics and Protestants ever increasing; and that which the people of Paris bore to the Huguenots knew no bounds when they saw them once more supported and upheld by the court. A pacific edict was published in the year 1570, which granted to the Calvinists the free exercise of their religion, and four places of safety, La Rochelle, Montauban, Cognac, and La Charité. The young King gave the hand of his sister Margaret of Valois to Henry, King of Navarre. Admiral Coligny, followed by an imposing retinue of Huguenot lords, appeared in Paris, and was received by King Charles with honors which would hardly have been granted to the preserver of the monarchy. This spectacle displeased the faithful citizens. But soon the rumor went round that the admiral threatened the King and Queen with a new civil war, because their majesties made some opposition to his demands, unjust and unreasonable as they were; that, when the King would not to please him declare war against the King of Spain, he had the audacity to tell him in open council that, if his majesty was not willing to make war in Flanders against Philip II., he could rest assured that he would soon have it in France against his own subjects.

And the King said to certain of his old followers that, seeing himself thus threatened, his hair stood on end. The Parisian people, amongst whom these rumors spread, knew no bounds in their fury against the sectaries. The personal quarrel between the Duke of Guise and Admiral de Coligny fed still more these great dissensions; every one foresaw that, from the haughty pride of the Huguenots, the hatred wherewith the King, the Queen-mother, and the Duke d'Anjou regarded them, and that which the two houses of Guise and Chatillon bore each other, some evil effects would follow. I was warned by the dean of the corporation of goldsmiths that a certain number of citizens and others had been sent for to the Louvre, where a surprise was feared during the night, and he advised me to keep in the house.

This was on the 24th of August, 1572. My brother Claude, then guardian of the Convent of Nantes, had obtained permission from his superiors to spend some days with me. We kept watch, as anxiously as though the storm were passing over our heads; my wife, also uneasy, had put aside her spinning-wheel, and was silently saying her rosary. Brother Claude was reciting in an under-tone the matins of his breviary. I was looking over my account-book, but my mind was elsewhere. . . . Part of the night had already passed. My brother was no longer praying, he was thinking, and suddenly he said to me:

"I am going out, going to Béthisy Street, to warn the admiral that something is being plotted against him. . . . I feel myself urged to give him this warning, for a sudden and violent death

would find him perhaps impenitent. . . . The hour predicted by the Père Grellet is near, but the mercy of God is greater than our crimes."

I dared not reply, for I felt his authority as that of an elder brother and a priest; and, besides, why should I oppose him when he meditated so holy an action? I wished to follow him, and my good wife understood my desire, for she said:

"Thibaut, I fear nothing here in our own house; we are known as honest people and faithful Catholics. . . . Whatever happens, I shall not be afraid. . . . Go with your brother, then. . . . Have no fears for me. . . ."

So saying, she tied a white handkerchief on my arm, according to the advice which the dean of our guild had given us in the morning, she gave me the horn-lantern, and we went out into the dark and starless night. The streets were deserted, but people were still up in many houses, as we saw by the light that shone from the windows. . . . There was deep silence. . . . Suddenly the great bell of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois began to toll loudly, and immediately there arose a fearful tumult around us. . . . Many houses opened; soldiers, citizens, constables, filled the streets, uttering threats and cries of death; shots from guns and pistols were heard; and by the light of torches were seen passing troops of armed men, crying:

"Death! Death to the Admiral! Vive la Messe!"

"Great God!" whispered my brother, "pardon those who use the name of thy sacrifice of peace hastening to murder and carnage! Oh! what evil

counsel there has been. . . . But let us hasten, brother Thibaut. . . ."

We reached the Rue Béthisy—it as light as day, and with one glance we saw that we had come too late. The dwelling of the admiral had been entered by the soldiers and followers of the Duke of Guise. We went into the court-yard. There we found him whom we had come to seek: the corpse of the admiral lay on the pavement, pierced with several wounds, and the horror of death was on the pale, contracted face. The prophecy of Father Grellet was accomplished. Not far from him lay the body of Séigny, his son-in-law, and the remains of some of their servants.

"We have seen enough," said my brother. "Let us go; these soldiers would not listen to words of peace. Let us go. God may perhaps present to us some other good work for the glory of his name."

We set out again. Armed bands paraded the streets and ransacked the houses which were known to belong to Huguenots. My brother's gown, and the white scarf which I wore on my arm, protected us from their insults, but both of us felt our hearts wrung at seeing the terrible vengeance taken by that infuriate mob, that soldiery without chiefs and without restraint. As we neared the Seine, the crowd diminished, the cries, blasphemies, musket-shots all died away in the distance, and we could scarcely see from afar the red light of the torches. As we turned into a deserted street a faint and painful moan reached our ears; my brother ran forward, I followed him, and by the light of the lantern we found on the pavement a man who

would have had all the appearance of death, were it not that long sighs came from his lips and announced that he was still living and suffering. I raised him in my arms. I threw aside the cap which covered his face.

"Oh!" said he, "how I suffer!"

"Knowest thou that voice, brother Thibaut?" cried Claude.

"Alas!" said I, "it is the voice of our poor François!"

Claude brought the lantern close to the face of the wounded man, and in spite of the blood from his wounds and his deathly pallor, we recognized our poor brother. He had swooned away. Without speaking or losing any time, we took up the heavy and inanimate body; and, God giving us strength, we bore it, without stopping for breath, to the threshold of my house. My good wife was waiting for us in deadly terror. She opened the door at my signal, and it was instantly decided that, in order to conceal him the better from servants and neighbors, we would place my brother at the back of the house, in a room which had been uninhabited since our mother's death. We laid him on the bed, and my wife and my brother sought out his wounds and endeavored to dress them. Alas! it was pitiful to see this handsome and vigorous young man return thus to his home, dying and pierced with wounds!

"Is there any hope?" asked I.

My wife turned towards me with a mournful glance, and brother Claude exclaimed:

"Let us invoke God that the soul, at least, may

be saved ! O God of mercy, let not the work of thy hands perish thus !”

François made some movement. He groaned and muttered some broken words :

“I shall not die without defending myself,” said he, making an effort with his feeble hand, as if to repulse a threatening enemy. “Ah ! ah ! I have wounded you ; but I have also got my share . . . my death-blow.”

He fell back exhausted ; but he strove to murmur the cry familiar to the soldiers of Condé :

“Sweet is danger for Christ and for our country ! Vive l’Evangile !” . . . Down with the Guisards ! I detest the Mass and images ! Oh ! how I suffer.”

His pale face became contracted ; his cold hand groped about the quilt ; it seemed as if death had passed over his livid face, and that his soul was witnessing an awful spectacle.

“O God ! God of mercy !” cried Claude, throwing himself on his knees, “by thy blood, by thy wounds, by thy cross, delay, delay his death ! Give my brother one moment of life and of reason to abjure his errors ! Lord, I offer myself entirely to thee. . . . I have dreaded death. I have feared the torments which I saw my brethren suffer ; but now I accept them ; I offer myself as a victim for him ! Do not spare me, Lord ! Here are my limbs, here is my blood, my life. . . . They are but little for the salvation of this soul ; but thou art so good and merciful that thou wilt not reject my offering. Mother of mercy, thou, angel

* “The Gospel for ever !”

of peace, who weepst with us, pray ! pray ! there is yet time !”

I remained silent, motionless, between my two brothers. So powerful a prayer could not remain unheard. My wife wet François's lips and temples with a cordial ; he sighed, his eyes opened, their dim glance was calm.

“Where am I ?” asked he, in a quiet voice.

“In your father's house,” said I, embracing him, “between your two brothers, Claude and Thibaut.”

“Is it possible,” said he, “it is you ! Oh ! what a frightful dream I have just had. . . . I saw myself summoned, judged, and condemned . . . damned ! and I still live.”

“My brother,” cried Claude, with the inspiration of a prophet, “my beloved brother, you still live. God has granted you this moment. It is the moment of grace, the time of repentance. God awaits to condemn or absolve you. Renounce your errors, and cast yourself into the arms of Jesus Christ, open to receive you.” . . . The dying man looked at us all ; we were weeping and praying.

“I may be pardoned,” murmured he feebly ; “yet I have sinned much. I have blood on my hands. . . . Oh ! but I have done evil since I quitted this house, this happy, innocent house ! Once, I believed, I prayed. . . . For long years I have not prayed, for I no longer believed. . . . My God, take pity on me. . . . If there was a Catholic priest here !” . . .

“I am a priest,” cried Claude. “I can hear and absolve you.”

He bent over François, holding him in an embrace. We left the room. The voice of our poor

François could be heard, with that of Claude, who spoke gently and with authority. At length, I saw my brother solemnly raise his hand and make the sign of the cross over the dying man, pronouncing in a distinct voice the holy words of absolution. I approached; François was calm; he had his hands clasped, and seemed as if praying inwardly. He said to us, speaking with difficulty:

"I invoke the sweet Mother of God; in the midst of my errors I had never altogether forgotten her. Our mother loved her so much. . . ."

He could not continue; his strength was failing rapidly; the agony began; it was short, but severe, and when the early dawn came into the room, the repentant soul of our poor brother had appeared before God.

We passed the next day, sad and recollected, beside the remains of our poor François, unheeding the agitation of the mob, who went on to Montfaucon and along the Seine, to see the corpses of the Huguenots.

Towards evening, the officers of justice published, with sound of trumpet, an edict, in the name of the King, by which he forbade "those of the guard and officers of the city to take up arms or make prisoners, under pain of death; but that all should be placed in the hands of justice, and that they should retire to their closed houses, which would appease the fury of the people, and give several of them time to retire from the country."*

This edict served to restore public peace; I had

* See La Popelinière, a Protestant historian, author of "La Vraie et entière Histoire des derniers Troubles."

our brother buried with the prayers of the Church, and with the money found on him I made a foundation of Masses for the repose of his soul.

A few days after, my brother Claude left us. Embracing me, he said :

“ My dearest brother, I believe that I am bidding you a last farewell. Something tells me in the depth of my soul that the sacrifice which I offered to God for our dear François has been accepted, therefore I do not expect ever to have the happiness of seeing you again in this world ; but here below, or before God, I shall never forget you.”

He blessed us all and went away. I never saw him again on earth, God having accepted the oblation of the just in behalf of the sinner. My worthy brother was sent as visitor to the convents of his order in Languedoc, where the Huguenots had revived their former fury. He fell into the hands of a party of German troopers, who, after having subjected him to all manner of insults and outrages, and obtaining from him only words of faith, of courage, and of benediction, they put him to death with every imaginable cruelty. He rendered up his blessed soul to God, singing the *Credo*, with a fervor and piety which overcame the horror of torture. Such was the account of his glorious end, from a companion who, terrified at sight of the troopers, had hid in the brushwood.

The Provincial of the Capuchin Fathers wrote me this account, exhorting me to give glory to God, which I did amid my teare. I had a little monument erected to my two brothers, in the Church of Saint Eustace, near the second pillar from the choir. On it was inscribed :

BROTHER CLAUDE DUCHAISNE,
PRIEST OF THE ORDER OF CAPUCHINS,
PUT TO DEATH THROUGH HATRED OF RELIGION, THE 20TH OF
JUNE, 1572.
MAY GOD RECEIVE HIM IN HIS GLORY.

FRANCOIS DUCHAISNE,
SUB-OFFICER IN THE ARMY OF THE PRINCE OF CONDE,
WHO DIED ON THE NIGHT OF AUGUST 24TH, 1572.
MAY GOD HAVE MERCY ON HIM.

Since then no remarkable event has occurred in my family. I took part, as all good Frenchmen should, in the Holy League, created to defend the most Christian kingdom against the temporal and spiritual tyranny of the Huguenots, and against the bad government of King Henry the Third, who seemed to be worthy of the throne, until he was seated upon it. We sought to maintain the ancient laws and religion of the monarchy, and we opposed the impiety which was caused by the Protestant confederation.

The indolence and the vices of the King, the near extinction of the race of Valois, the right of succession devolving upon the heretical King of Navarre, the troubles which threatened France in the near future, filled with alarm the hearts of good Frenchmen and faithful Catholics. Some would have raised to the throne the Duke of Guise, a descendant of Charlemagne, and a prince so noble and so valiant that all the other princes seemed as commoners beside him; others hoped that the blood of Saint Louis would not lose its rights, and that one day the King of Navarre would return to the faith of his fathers. I was amongst these latter. The death of the Duke of Guise, and the Cardinal

de Lorraine, his brother, who were treacherously assassinated by order of the King, brought to its height the hatred which the people bore to the last of the Valois. The Sorbonne and the Parliament declared him to have forfeited his right to the crown. He marched against Paris to avenge himself on the head and heart of the League; but he was, as is known, assassinated at Saint Cloud by the hand of the unfortunate Jacques Clément; and, dying, he declared that he left the throne to the King of Navarre, henceforth Henry IV.

The League, faithful to its oath, would not recognize the heretic King. The victory which he gained at Ivry over the Duke of Mayence only increased the resolution of the Parisians to let him lay siege to their city, to suffer hunger and every danger, to maintain the head of the kingdom in his fidelity to the service of God. On the 8th of May, 1590, the King of Navarre laid siege to Paris. There was only wheat for one month; all the lords, prelates, and rich or well-to-do persons came, with extraordinary liberality, to the assistance of the poor; but soon we all suffered alike. The wheat failing, we ate oats in bread and in broth; on the butchers' stalls was sold only the flesh of horses and dogs, and the poor pulled up the grass which grew up through the pavement, and boiled it. All around us was a frightful scene of misery, disease, and want; but, nobles and citizens, rich and poor, we preferred to die rather than give up the city to a heretical prince, and the kingdom to the errors of Calvin. "The martyrdom of hunger," said we to our wives and children, "is no less meritorious than that of the sword!"

The siege lasted till the 30th of August, and was a memorable example. I had risked my goods to buy at a high price the church silver, which the pastors had sold to distribute the price thereof to the poor people, and my fortune never recovered after that great effort; but I esteem them well risked and well sacrificed, for the safety of religion and the relief of the poor of Jesus Christ.

The constancy of the Parisians, imitated by the inhabitants of Rouen, bore its fruits, and opened the eyes of the King of Navarre. He abjured his errors on the 25th of July, in the year 1593. Six months after he was consecrated King of France, and on the 22d of March, 1594, he made his solemn entry into Paris, which had now won its King to the faith of his fathers, to the faith of Clovis, of Charlemagne, and of Saint Louis, so that the Most Christian Kingdom might always remain the first amongst nations, whose throne, like that of Saint Peter, has never been profaned by heresy.

So ended the religious wars, whose most bloody scenes I witnessed. I lost in them two beloved brothers, and a great portion of my wealth. Often the young people, the wags of my quarter, mock at me, and call me the *Old Leaguer*. But God knew my intention and my love for his law, and it is to his justice that I appeal from the vain accusations of men.

May those who come after us also do their duty, and support the monarchy in the right way of truth and of faith!



XIII.

THE TREASURY-CLERK—SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

SIXTY years have passed since the *Old Leaguer* recorded the troubles of the times in which he lived. My father, who as a citizen of Paris took active part in the Fronde, wrote nothing, contenting himself with acting in favor of the Parliament against Mazarin. He had a lively recollection of the times in which he lived, and spoke of them willingly, and many times have I heard him relate how he had witnessed the great popular movement provoked by the arrest of Counsellor Broussel: tumult and rebellion spreading through the populous districts of Paris as far as the Palais Royal; Marshal de la Meilleraie, sent to chastise the people, was nearly put to death by the infuriate crowd; the coadjutor of Gandy, in surplice and cope, kneeling in the stream, hearing the confession of a man whom Marshal de la Meilleraie had just shot down, and by this ready act of humility calming the multitude, and seizing the marshal by both hands, to bring him to the Queen and to the cardinal. He had witnessed the barricades, the siege of Paris, and the flight at the Saint Antoine gate; and after having condemned, like every one else, he also applauded the return of the young King to Paris; and after having cried, "Down with Mazarin!" he cried

out just as loudly, "Long live the cardinal!" As his office of court-jeweller put him in connection with many important persons, he got me into the treasury department, which was then under the control of Messire Nicholas Fouquet. There I advanced rapidly enough, and soon, being initiated into some of the secrets of that great administration, I became convinced that the Marquis d'Effiat spoke truly when he compared treasurers and receivers-general to the "cuttle-fish, which has the art of stirring up the water to deceive the eyes of the attentive fisherman." What piercing eyes must he have had to discern anything in the dark and muddy waters in which the receipts and expenses were tossed about! After the cruel disasters of the League, the religious wars, the prodigality of the Valois princes to their favorites, a sterling minister, Sully, was found, who, by encouraging agriculture and commerce, had repaired in twelve years the disasters of half a century. "Tillage and pasturage," said this able man, "are the two sources from which France is nourished, the true Peruvian mines and treasures."

But, when the father of the family was no more, when Henry had perished by the knife of Ravaillac, and when Concini had replaced Sully in the state, the water was again troubled. However, Providence, favorable to empires, permitted that the great Cardinal Richelieu should restore financial order, control with a strong hand the Huguenots and the great lords, and bequeath to his successor, Mazarin, a kingdom at once rich and powerful. But the regency, the Fronde, the ministry of Mazarin, once more disturbed the equilibrium; the

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public revenues were mortgaged for three years, the people underwent frightful miseries, for the cardinal had given fifty millions to his family, and the Superintendent Fouquet built a mansion at Vaux whose splendor eclipsed that of the royal residences. Like a king, he gave pensions to particular persons; he had men at his beck in all the provinces, who gave him an account of public affairs, and whom he made, by immense bribes, devoted followers.

It was evident to all that the superintendent was spending sums without any proportion to his fortune or to the revenues of his office. But who would have dared to disturb this powerful and formidable man, who was accountable to the King alone?

In the functions of my office, I acquired proof of a base transaction, which was to profit only Fouquet and some of the followers whom he gorged at the expense of the King and the country, and I ventured in the first heat of indignation to speak of it openly. The report of this reached the ears of the superintendent; he sent for me to his office, and received me with the affability which, apart from his wealth, won all hearts to him.

"You have been imprudent," said he, "in speaking to your associates, or even to your most intimate friends, of the condition of public affairs, and I would have reason to complain of you since my name was mixed up in your discourse. You cannot deny it?"

"Nor is such my intention," answered I. "I do not conceal it, my lord; the traffic which is going on around us has shocked me, and I could not be silent with regard to it. If it is a crime, punish me for it."

"I could do so, perhaps ; but a faithful servant of the King does not deserve bad treatment. The treasury, it is true, is in a deplorable condition. The state is overrun with debt ; but yet neither the interests of war nor the diplomatic relations are endangered for an instant for want of money, for individuals who will not lend to the state will lend to me."

I dared not reply ; but I remembered some usurious interest which the state was paying on these loans made to the superintendent. He continued :

"I do not fear enemies," said he. "In a position like mine they are not to be feared ; but I like to make friends for myself, and I wish you to be among the number. I have noticed you ; your advancement shall be rapid, your fortune sure, I will guarantee ; but, in my turn, I desire a pledge of your fidelity."

"And what is that, my lord ?"

"Some persons to whom I have done a service, and who were grateful to me, have signed, without my asking it, engagements . . . something like this."

So saying, the superintendent opened a casket, drew out a paper, and read the first lines, which I give here :

"I promise and pledge my faith to my lord the Procurator-General, Superintendent of the Finances, and Minister of State, to never to belong to any one but him, to whom I give and attach myself to the last degree, and I promise to serve him generally against all persons without exception, and to

obey him alone, even in so far as to have no connection with those to whom he objects."*

He went no further.

"To sign such a document, sir," exclaimed I, "is treason to the state! I have heard enough."

Fouquet regarded me with a sinister glance.

"Would you be capable of betraying me?" said he. "Beware; you are nothing. I can either load you with honors and favors, or leave you to die, unknown and forgotten, in the depth of some Bastille. Those better born than you have pined there long before death came to deliver them."

Hearing him speak thus, I remembered the Gospel, and I thought of the tempter, the enemy of man, who was offering me earthly dignities as the price of my degradation. I am only an obscure citizen, but my heart felt for the sufferings, the tears, the blood of the people, which would have to pay for this fortune that he offered me, and my conscience withheld me, by its pleadings, from all participation in these mysteries of shame and corruption.

"I do not fear you!" said I; "less, perhaps, than you fear me. An accusation of speculation might bring even a minister of state to the Place de Grève. . . . Remember Sambalngai, remember Concini! When the King knows to what an extent he has been deceived, his wrath will be fearful, his justice terrible!"

*Two documents drawn up in these terms, and signed, one by Deslandes, Governor of Concarneau, the other by President Marialor, were found amongst Superintendent Fouquet's papers. See "Nicholas Fouquet," by Pierro Clement (in the "Collection of the Correspondent for the year 1845").

I went out, he not daring to stop me ; and, without loss of any time I repaired to Mr. Colbert, then Commissioner of Finances, and who had been for some time my friend and protector. I revealed to him what had passed ; I gave him the evident proofs of the defalcation of which I accused the superintendent.

He reflected for a long time, and at length answered :

"I am under obligations to the superintendent, and I think I have proved to him my gratitude by urging him to renounce operations so dangerous to his own honor and injurious to the interests of the King and the state ; he would not listen to me ; waste and pillage have continued their course ; I have broken off my connection with him. God is my witness, I have no desire to ruin him or to raise myself through his downfall ; but I have, above all, at heart the good of the King, the safety of the state, the relief of the poor people, and what you have just told me will make the cup which is already full overflow. I tell you in confidence, the King is tired of all that is going on ; he knows the falsity of the financial reports which Fouquet places before his eyes every month, and before long his justice will burst upon him. As for you, you have nothing to fear. Keep quiet and wait."

I waited accordingly, and I was a witness of that great catastrophe which caused so much excitement in the court and in the city. The Session of the Breton States obliged the King to make a journey into Nantes ; the superintendent followed him. The rumor of his disgrace began to get abroad ; he alone, notwithstanding the warnings of his friends,

remained incredulous. He was working with the King as usual, and thought himself secure of his favor, when M. D'Artagnan, captain of musketeers, made him prisoner in the King's name, and brought him to the Castle of Angers, amid the threats and imprecations of the crowd. The seals were put on his papers, his family was banished from court, and his trial immediately began. The first count of the indictment was:

That Fouquet was accused, 1st, of having written a plan of what his relatives and friends should do for him in case he was oppressed.

2d. Of having fortified his castle of Belle Isle, and placed cannon therein.

3d. Of having had the government of Concarneau.

4th. Of having received the written contract of various persons pledging themselves to be absolutely devoted to his interests.

5th. Of having made supposed loans without necessity, so as to be entitled to draw interest.

6th. Of having made advances to the King of money, which was against the rules, being himself director.

7th. Of having mixed the King's money with his own, and used it for his domestic purposes.

8th. Of being interested in farms and leases, under assumed names, and of having acquired the goods and property of the King at low prices.

9th. Of having taken pensions and bribes from farmers and speculators, to let them have farms and leases at lower prices.

10th. It was finally alleged that his administration had been ruinous, that he had made treaties

to the disadvantage of the King, and had applied the funds to bad purposes.*

I was present at the debates on this celebrated affair; I saw the superintendent, great and courageous in misfortune, more worthy of esteem amid his reverses than in the height of his brilliant prosperity, appearing before the Parliament, one of whose first offices he had once filled; I heard him defend himself with precision and firmness, but his eloquence failed to convince judges who were enlightened by facts which spoke louder than words; I heard his sentence of banishment for life, which was changed by the King to perpetual imprisonment. It was soon known that D'Artagnan had taken his prisoner to Pignerol; for a few months the superintendent was still spoken of; he was the subject of conversation and of anxiety amongst his friends; then oblivion slowly wove its veil over that once celebrated memory; and when, at the end of seventeen years, in 1680, Fouquet died in the prison which he had never left, the event was scarcely noticed; his former friends, servants, and followers had almost forgotten that the superintendent had ever lived.

The post which he had left vacant was worthily filled by Mr. Colbert, that great minister whose integrity repaired the financial disasters of Mazarin and Fouquet. Placed under his orders, I had an opportunity of seeing how irreproachable conduct is conducive to success. He owed all to his merit, and nothing to his birth, for he was the son of a

* Historical defalcations, abuse of public money, plan of a civil war, these are the heads of the accusations against Fouquet, which justified his condemnation.

merchant of Rheims; and he himself, to keep down his children's pride, often reminded them of their origin, adding that God had blessed his labor, but that his labor had been excessive. Moreover, the glorious reign of Louis XIV., whilst keeping the nobility in command of armies and in the honors of the court, gave employment in the revenue departments and in courts of justice to men of citizen birth, provided that they possessed merit and ability. Such was the lot of Colbert; and connected with the people by his origin, he remembered his sufferings. He reduced the taxes which weighed especially on the poor people of the rural districts; he obtained from the King severe edicts against usurers; all the pastors of Paris read at the sermon a warning: "Making it an obligation to denounce certain persons who had and retained several sums of money belonging to the King, who had obtained loads of straw, hay, and oats, and a great deal of game and fish, which, their houses being provided, they had sold for much money, all being tax-payers, to lessen their taxes; who had made use of false weights to weigh gold crowns, and who had drawn up false documents."

These severe measures had their effect; great scandals met with exemplary punishment; one hundred millions returned to the coffers of the state, public anger was appeased, and the lowest peasant in France knew that the King and the first minister would, in any contingency, do justice to his rights. Soon negotiation and commerce saw new worlds opening before them. The King, advised by Colbert, protected the growing colony of San Domingo, sought to found one at Madagascar,

and created the celebrated East India Company, in imitation of the United Provinces, which, combining the labor and capital of some individuals, became mistress of the spice trade, and possessed numerous establishments in all the Indian Archipelago. Extending commerce abroad, encouraging the increase of the navy, Colbert also busied himself with means of communication in the interior of the kingdom. He commenced the Languedoc Canal, which was to connect the two seas; he established manufactories at Arras, at Rheims, at Louviers, at Sedan, at Quesnoy, at Alençon; he founded a glass manufactory at Paris; he protected the *Journal des Savants*; he brought from Italy the celebrated architect Bernini to direct the King's buildings; he commenced the new Louvre, and finished the Observatory.

Happy were it for the King if he had known the happiness and glory of peace! But a young and powerful monarch desires other renown. He obtained it; victory lavished her favors upon him; Franche-Comté, conquered in a fortnight by the arms of the Prince of Condé, offered to the King the first delusive fruits of those long wars in which he was to consume his life, the gold, and the blood of his people. For twenty years this powerful France sustained incessant war, having always men and money to give to the King. For twenty years the glory was great; the state and the King shone with extraordinary lustre. But, in the eyes of wise men, terrible reverses must follow this too enviable prosperity. For twenty years an obscure clerk of that great minister whose memory is so dear to me, I witnessed his zeal for the public good—his prodigi-

ous labors, his strict integrity ; I saw him give to all the details of an immense administration continual and vigilant attention ; I saw him seek to communicate to his sons the sentiments with which he was animated for the King and country ; insensible to satire, deaf to threats, concealing under a phlegmatic exterior a natural impetuosity, and advancing to his end, discharging his duty, notwithstanding cabals and opposition. Yet, firm as was his will, he knew how to consult good faith and follow a wise counsel. I shall cite a single example of which I was a witness ; I could give a thousand others under his ministry. The garden of the Tuileries was renovated after the design of Le Notre ; and, when it was finished, M. Colbert said to me one day : " Let us go to the Tuileries to see about the gates ; that garden must be kept for the King, and we cannot let it be destroyed by the people, who, in less than no time, will have it entirely spoiled." This proposal pained me somewhat ; being a child of Paris, I knew the fondness of Parisians for this garden ; I knew that it would be for them a most vexatious privation, and one which would excite general discontent.

Having reached the grand alley, I told the minister, as cautiously as I could, that no one could believe the respect which every one, even to the lowest citizen, felt for that garden ; that not even the women and little children would ever pluck a flower, nor even touch one, as the gardeners could testify, and that it would be a public affliction not to be allowed to go there any more.

" Undoubtedly, my lord," I added, " the garden

of our kings is so large, only that all their children may walk in it !”

At these words, the minister's stern face relaxed, and it was decided that the Tuileries should remain open to the public. This was really joy to me ; and, when I grew old, and went to seek there a little sunlight, the joyous voices of the passers-by and the little children made my heart young again, and brought back to me the memory of the great man with whom I had formerly trod these alleys, and who, at my entreaty, was pleased to preserve it for the people.

Brilliant as was the reign of Louis le Grand, with whatever splendor the throne was surrounded by the talents of generals, statesmen, poets, and orators, under this external glory, as at the bottom of all human things, was sadness and bitterness. Colbert had found in the Secretary of War, Louvois, a secret but implacable enemy, who, seconding the warlike ambition of the King, dealt to finances, and consequently to the upright minister who controlled them, a fatal blow. For twenty years France had no other enemies than those which she made in sport ; but, to carry on these glorious but ruinous wars, the state consumed all that was most precious—the blood and gold of the nobility and of the people.

One day I saw M. Colbert gloomy and sad. I ventured to question him.

“The King,” said he, “has just asked of me sixty millions for the extraordinary expenses of war. Alarmed at such a sum, I answered that I did not think I could furnish means for such expenditure. ‘Think over it,’ immediately answered the King ;

‘some one else will undertake to supply it, if you are not willing to do so.’*

“That will be,” continued the minister, “the last blow dealt to France ; the dearest interests of the state will be sacrificed to a whim of ambition, and, as for me, my enemies will ruin me ; by urging the King to war and taxes, they will destroy my work, and force me to leave the council.” . . .

He walked about in deep thought, and repeating in a low voice these verses, which the poet Hénault had addressed to him after the condemnation of Fouquet :

“His fall some day may be thy own,
Near thy post, rank, court, and fortune.” . . .

I dared not speak, but I trembled for my master and friend. From that day he became still more serious. Whilst formerly he might be seen going about his work, rubbing his hands gleefully, since that event he worked with a sorrowful and dejected air. The ascendancy of Louvois increased every day, and, whilst encouraging the King’s taste for war and perilous enterprises, he hastened the ruin of the country, and hurried his rival into the grave. After a stormy interview with the King, M. Colbert returned home, and took to bed, whence he never rose. It was from that bed of suffering that he estimated truly the greatness of this world ; he wished to think of nothing but his salvation, repeating frequently, “If I had done for God what I have done for the King, I might have twice saved my soul, and now I know not what will become of me !”

* All these details are historical.

He died in the arms of Father Bourdaloue, disgusted with the things of earth, which he had seen too closely, and hoping only to find rest and mercy with the Lord.

I mourned this great man with a bitterness the more lively that I saw him misunderstood by those whom he had best served—the people and the King. He had ended his noble life, convinced of general ingratitude, and he was followed even beyond the grave by the insults of rhymers and libellers. If he could have foreseen the lamentable distress into which France was plunged by wars, which became more and more disastrous by want, by the ruin of the public funds, by the exhaustion of the vital strength of the country, he would have felt still greater anguish in death. A fearful struggle, a struggle of ten years against the whole of Europe, victories, but burdensome victories, since they resulted in the treaty of Ryswick, by which the conquests made by Louis the Great were restored to its enemies, this struggle had ill prepared France for the Spanish war of succession, heart-rending calamities of which we see to-day. Lonely and old amongst a new generation, I recall the first splendors which marked the dawning of the reign of Louis; I recall the prosperity which the wise Colbert spread around him; I recall the glory which Turenne, Condé, Créqui, Luxembourg, Duquesne, Tourville, had brought to the French arms. These great men are no more, and their successors, men of a new age, seemed to have degenerated and to be of a nature less noble and less great. I remember, but the King must also remember!—he who alone remains of all his family, with only a child in the

cradle. This severe and penetrating glance should take in the calamities which the future reserves for our descendants: the misery of the people, the grumbling and discontent of the citizens, the dark impiety which is increasing every day, the weakness of the army, the confusion of the finances, the national character weakened and debased, the contempt of glorious deeds, the love of good living and pleasure, the monarchy about to fall into the hands of a child, under the regency of the Duke de Maine, unpopular by his birth, or under that of a Duke of Orleans, to be feared from his known defects as well as from his hidden vices. . . .

I shall not see these misfortunes: I am almost at the end of a long career, during which I have tried to serve my country, in the humble sphere to which I was called by my birth; I fulfilled my task with honor and integrity; but, whilst peacefully quitting this life, I tremble for those who shall come after us. We have sown the whirlwind, they shall reap the storm; and the disasters which our wars and disorders have prepared for them can only be averted by the hand of Providence.

O God, Eternal Providence, watch over France, watch over the dauphin, soon to be King, the dear and last flower of so fair a stem!



XIV.

PHILOSOPHY—EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

MY venerable grandfather, a man of sense and judgment, had foreseen the misfortunes which overwhelm us in the present and threaten us in the future. But, whatever might be his judgment, enlightened by a long life and by the experience of men and things, he could not foresee the torrent of evils which licentiousness and impiety have brought upon France, and into the interior of families. God has withdrawn himself from us, or, to better express it, we have rejected him. . . . Every day he is insulted and blasphemed, his divine commandments violated; there are to be found amongst us men, and men honored by all, who have sworn war against God, who would crush the infamous.* France is to-day, through its writers, the enemy of the Lord, the standard-bearer of atheism—in other words, France is lost; for who has resisted the Lord and found peace?

We were two brothers, brought up alike, under the care of most tender parents, with the same destiny before us; but our dispositions were widely different. I sought only a hidden, retired life; I

* "Eraser l'infame," the famous expression of Voltaire in reference to our Divine Saviour.

had no ambition for any other than domestic joys ; my desires and attachments went no farther than the hearth round which the family assembled ; and I wished for nothing more here below than to be happy, as my father had been, by honest labor, to find a wife like my mother, and to have one day children who would love me as I love my parents. I have little to say of myself, for I have been happy with the happiness which I sought ; my position as a notary has amply provided for all my wants, and given me employment in accordance with my tastes. I married a wife after my own heart, and she made me father of two daughters, who gave promise of merit and virtue.

My brother Louis from his childhood showed ambition, love of display, and of enjoyment ; the distinctions which laws and customs had established between men irritated him ; a lord of the court appeared to him of all beings the most enviable ; he did not disdain the lot of a simple gentleman, on whom his birth conferred the *place of honor* in church and many other privileges ; to rule was his dream ; and finding himself, by birth, confounded with the immense multitude of good and honest citizens, he wished at least to acquire, by means of fortune, the supremacy which he coveted. He connected himself with financiers, he took part in their speculations, he conducted his own with much skill ; and, at the age of thirty-five, being master of a large fortune, he obtained the farmer-generalship of salt works, and he married the daughter of a leading financier.

This marriage and office gave my brother an entirely new position, which removed him from me,

from our connections, and the old friends of our family. He lived in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, in a large mansion, resplendent with crystals, mirrors, and gildings, and enriched with the choicest works of Boucher, Coypel, Lancret, and Bouchardon. A numerous retinue of servants filled the ante-chambers; Madame Duchaisne's drawing-room, glittering with pictures, mirrors, and bronzes, was finer than those of the court ladies; her horses, her dress, her diamonds, were the envy of the most wealthy ladies; my brother gathered every day around his table numerous guests, titled men, ladies of fashion, bankers, and, let me add, those wits, men of letters, whose writings were stirring not only France, but Europe.

The public voice gave such accounts of the riches, the magnificent life, and brilliant connections of my mother, that it seemed to us, humble citizens, a fairy tale, a fable of the "Thousand and One Nights." My wife was astonished, my daughters opened their eyes very wide at hearing of these marvels of wealth and luxury; my good wife sometimes added: "How happy they are; how much good they can do!" But, as for me, I found in these descriptions, in these accounts, many reasons for trouble and anxiety. I loved my brother, though circumstances had separated me from him, and I learned with deep sorrow his intimate connection with those who were called philosophers, encyclopædists. I knew their works, and I knew in what danger they were harrying the family and the monarchy. I thought I saw in their intimate connection a sinister conspiracy against all the laws which are the foundation of society. Religion at-

tacked, and consequently morality destroyed, give glimpses of a very gloomy future ; and it was these vile enemies of God, these dangerous enemies of the state, these cruel enemies of humanity, that my brother gathered round his table, whose Mæcenæ he made himself, for it was said he repaid their flatteries with gold !

The Encyclopædia was at once the means and the pretext of which they made use to spread their opinions and conceal their designs ; it appeared to be only a laborious and purely literary work ; but wise and religious men became alarmed at seeing the names of the leaders of the enterprise. Soon there appeared, simultaneously with the Encyclopædia, a vast number of satires against priests, religious, and the authorities, and a multitude of impious and licentious pamphlets, which, being spread throughout all classes, speaking a language too easy to understand, and within the reach of every mind, corrupted even the women and children who had scarcely left the school-bench. The great lords, flattered in their passions, the citizens in their prejudices, became the support of those who seek to overthrow the throne, cast opprobrium on the altar, and who are hurrying us all towards an abyss to which advisers of the monarchy are blindly leading us. . . . O unhappy France !

I see, by the examples all around me, the evil which the so-called philosophers are doing and will do ; as for the good, I honestly perceive none. I see that in attacking religion they destroy morality ; that they shake the respect due to supreme authority, whilst flattering the foibles of the monarch ; I see that the national character is weakened,

that the French mind is debased, that there is no more belief in God ; I see licentiousness and corruption, which are carrying us on towards an unknown but terrible future. Such is the end of a community when God withdraws himself from it. . . .

My brother invited me to a supper which he was giving to his brilliant friends, and, yielding to his entreaties, I went to it.

The recollection of that evening long pursued me. I met in those magnificent *salons* around that table, on which appeared the works of the best Parisian cook, a numerous assembly and a complete academy. Of the men of the court, M. De Schomberg, an ardent admirer of Voltaire's poetry ; M. De Tressan, the author of some agreeable writings taken from old fables ; the Count de Jaucourt, who was taking part in the *Encyclopædia* ; then, Diderot, whose pathos and extravagance astonished me ; Helvetius, celebrated for a rather ordinary work ; the cold Abbé Morellet, Raynal, D'Alembert ; some young women, their admirers, and some financiers, friends of my brother, completed the company. Finding themselves amongst intimate associates (for I was of no account there), they spoke freely ; my brother even boasted of having assembled at that dinner the *élite* of the philosophers, that is to say, atheists, and to have admitted only one deist, the Abbé Morellet.

"Atheists and deists tend to the same thing," observed Raynal—"the regeneration of the human kind."

"The destruction of the temple of error," added D'Alembert.

"O happy day ! golden age !" exclaimed Diderot,

"when mankind shall be freed from its chains, and rid of princes, priests, of worship, and of religious prejudices! It is in the workshop of sorrow that unfortunate man has fashioned the phantom which he has made his God. . . . The same cause has formed his tyrants and his slavery. Philosophy, the true friend of man, comes to his aid, and encourages him to break the yoke of both one and the other. May I see that day!

'And with the guts of the last priest
See the last king strangled.'"

"Bravo! bravo!" cried my wretched brother. "These are new ideas and daring sentiments. But let us speak of the *Encyclopædia*: you know, gentlemen, that I am interested in it."

"You surely have good right, my dear Duchaisne," answered Helvetius; "and, if the name of Mæcenas has come down to posterity, yours shall be also blessed by your descendants. You support this great work, the immortal enterprise of this age of reason and enlightenment, and which shall have, above all others, the merit of having forever annihilated superstition."

"Therefore," continued Diderot, "must we not yield to the bawling of priests and bigots. *Let us lie, let us lie, my friends!*"* It is the patriarch who recommends it to us, and we shall put down prejudices."

"We are stifled with prejudices," answered Helvetius; "they choke us from our very infancy by

*An expression of Voltaire's, often repeated in his correspondence.

the names of son, brother, husband, father. . . . All these ties of father and child are injurious to those of citizen, and produce vice under the appearance of virtue ; little communities whose interests are almost always opposed to the public interests would eventually extinguish in souls every spark of love of country. The people cannot be freed from these calamities but by breaking all bonds of relationship, and declaring their children citizens of the state. This is the only means of putting down vice. . . . Moreover, every species of dependence being unjust, the son depends no more on the father than the latter on his offspring."*

At these words I looked at my brother. He was applauding.

The conversation continued in this strain ; I was at last forced to speak out, and I had at least the consolation of sustaining the cause of eternal justice and of outraged morality. I was answered by stale jokes ; my brother seemed ill at ease ; he changed the conversation. They spoke of literature, praise and applause bandied about amongst themselves, whilst criticising severely the most estimable authors, such as M. De Pompignan, the Abbé Guénée, J. B. Rousseau,† who had devoted their talents to another cause. I listened for a full hour to cruel slanders, to infamous calumnies, scandalous anecdotes, which convulsed with laughter even the young women, unhappy pupils of irreligion and licentiousness, and I felt as if delivered from

* Helvetius, "De l'Esprit."

† J. B. Rousseau must not be confounded with the infidel writer, Jean Jacques.

cruel torture when I could leave the *select* assembly, in which I found myself so complete a stranger.

Next day I had an explanation with my brother, which left us both in our own ideas.

"And you will bring up your children in the principles of your philosophers?" asked I at length.

"Such is my intention," answered he. "They shall learn to read in the writings of Jean Jacques."

"And to honor you according to the maxims of Helvetius!"

I did not, however, break with my poor brother; returned to my old ways and my happiness, I again sought to enlighten him; but all my efforts were vain. The flattery of his parasites had turned his head; and the rich financier thought himself a man of genius, since he had received a letter dated Ferncy, and written by the patriarch's own hand.

The years, in passing, did not bring us together; but I thought I could perceive, on the rare occasions when we met, that my brother seemed sad, and had other cares than those which years in their flight are wont to bring. His fortune, however, was still brilliant, his house frequented; he had just married his daughter Felicie to the Baron de Pont; his son Edmond, he told me, was distinguishing himself by his literary talents, and had recently published three pamphlets, "*The Ifs*," "*The Whens*," "*The Wherefores*," which were making a sensation in the philosophical world. His third son, Henri, was a man of fashion, whose adventures were much talked of. My poor brother told me of his sons' feats with a gratified smile of paternal vanity; he congratulated himself on having one son an infidel,

another a libertine, and he seemed as if expecting that I would add my praise to that which he lavished on them.

"Are you satisfied with their conduct towards you?" said I to him. "Amidst so many temptations, are they good sons?"

"We see them but little; they are young. . . . What would you have? Youth must pass." . . . He sighed.

"And your daughter, for whom you have made such a brilliant marriage?"

He did not answer; and I thought I could see that the ingratitude of this beloved daughter was the arrow which pierced his heart. Oh! how I blessed my lot on returning home, amongst my attentive and respectful children, who had found in the law of God the confirmation of the first sentiment awakened in the depth of their hearts, and who loved me the more that in loving me they were honoring God, whom I had taught them to glorify and to love above all things!

Shortly after this interview with my brother, I learned that his son Henri was dangerously ill, in consequence of a supper, or rather carousal, which had taken place at the Palais Royal. I thought it my duty to bring to my brother the consolations of our old affection. I arrived at his mansion, which I found silent and gloomy; I was conducted into a room which adjoined the sick-room; and there I found my brother sitting, his head buried in his hands, absorbed in painful thought.

"Is it you, my brother?" said he. "You do not shun a house of mourning! You have heard . . . You know . . . My poor son!"

"My dear Louis, youth has many chances. Your son, I hope, will be restored to you."

"I cannot flatter myself with such a hope. . . . He is doomed. . . . I shall lose him, I shall see him no more ! O my dear Henri !"

He gave full vent to his paternal sorrow, in which I sincerely shared. I wept with him, and I deplored the fate of this unhappy young man, who had lived a slave to his passions, and who was about to die an enemy to God. We were both silent and in tears, when the door opened, and I saw a worthy priest, the pastor of the parish in which my brother lived, and known through all Paris for his zeal and apostolic charity. He saluted us, and, addressing Louis, said :

"Sir, I present myself again before you to offer you the services of my ministry for your son. I am your pastor, and God commands that I must not let one of the dear sheep of my flock perish unaided. Will you deign to admit me to the presence of your son ?"

My brother reddened, and, in a dejected tone, he answered :

"He refuses your visit, sir ; I proposed it to him. He wishes to die—"

"As he has lived ! O unhappy boy !"

"He has some prejudices"

"His mind, poisoned by pernicious doctrines, hates the ministers of religion. . . . But there is yet time to convince him of his errors, . . . and to prove to him that there are no more sincere friends than the servants of Jesus Christ."

"I do not wish to disturb him ! I wish his last hours to be peaceful." . . .

I interfered at these words. I urged my brother ; but it was in vain. He still feared, beside the death-bed of his son, the raillery of the wits, who did not wish that one of their number should "back out"; and, full of doubt in sight of the dark abyss of Eternity, he sought to blind himself, and to sacrifice to the sarcasms of the world that son whom he nevertheless loved so tenderly. A blind obstinacy had possession of his mind, and neither my suggestions nor the charitable entreaties of the old priest could dispel it. The pastor withdrew, saying :

"If the patient desires to see me, come, oh ! come at once. At whatever hour it may be, call me. . . . I am going to pray for him and for his mother." . . .

I remained with my brother ; but I could not obtain access to the patient. I spent the night at the house, in the midst of the constant alarm excited by the imminent danger of the unfortunate young man. Towards morning, being alone in the parlor, I heard a piercing cry which came from my nephew's room. I ran in ; my brother, terrified, came towards me, and murmured :

"He is dying !" And, so saying, fell senseless.

My sister-in-law was stretched on the bed with a violent attack of hysterics. Whilst the servants cared for them, I ran to Henri's bed. . . . He was dying ! His face had already the fearful expression which the death-agony gives. A cold sweat covered his forehead, and his glassy eyes looked with terror at the dark corners of the room, as though he saw there frightful visions. He raised his feeble hand to his eyes, as if to shut

out the objects which beset him. I took him in my arms.

"My boy," said I, "think of God; repent of your faults!"

"Who speaks to me of God? There is no God! No, no, no!"

"There is one, and he awaits you! O my dear boy! but a moment remains to you. Say, 'My God, I repent of having offended you! My God, I love you!'"

"I cannot! I do not understand you! . . . Later! Later!"

I again urged him. I showed him a crucifix which I carried about with me. He turned away his eyes, and said, with an expression of horror:

"Do you see those figures that fill the room? Put them out; defend me! . . . After that, I will do what you wish. . . ."

I made the sign of the cross over him, but his agitation continued. He hid his face. I uncovered it, and I implored him to pray with me. . . .

"Later!" answered he in a scarcely articulate voice. . . . I fell on my knees, and prayed fervently.

The door opened. The priest whom I had sent for came in and hurried to the bedside. . . . My nephew tried to rise, with haggard eyes and terrified face, and he fell back, murmuring:

"He is too late! too late! Oh! save me."

"O Lord! but thy judgments are terrible," cried the priest. "I have seen the impious, like unto the cedar of Lebanon. I passed, and it is no more. This is the punishment of a badly spent youth! Unhappy child!"

"Unhappy father! unhappy mother!" cried I.
"What a punishment!"

I left the priest in prayer beside those deplorable remains, and I went to my brother's room. He was unconscious of his misfortune. He had been stricken with apoplexy, and was in his bed insensible. My sister-in-law, who had come to herself, gave vent to the bitterness of her maternal sorrow, with which deep remorse was mingled.

"He feared nothing," said she to me, "and he loved only pleasure. . . . He died a victim to our weakness, our blindness. . . . We have killed him! Oh! would to Heaven that we had been less indulgent to him! Fatal indulgence! it has led him into the abyss, and drags us there with him. O my dear Henri! where are you? What has become of you?"

I spent that cruel day and the next with my sister-in-law. My wife also came. My brother remained unconscious, in a state of utter helplessness. I then received bitter confidences. I could not explain the absence of Edmond and of Félicie, at this fearful time, which left their mother alone overwhelmed by so many misfortunes.

"Alas! brother," said Madame Duchaisne, "we do not see my daughter any more. . . . She is in the midst of the great world of pleasures, which are perhaps dangerous. She has given us up, she denies us. It is said that her husband plays a great game . . . he is the intimate companion of the Duke d'Orleans . . . he is leagued, it is said, against the court, against our good Queen. . . . All this is very afflicting. . . . I see nothing in the future but ruin and disaster."

"And my nephew, Edmond?"

"He is in England; he is contemplating a philosophical work on the English constitution."

"Very good. But are you satisfied with his conduct and proceedings?"

"What shall I say, brother? I sometimes think that Edmond finds us very much behind the age and very tiresome. . . . Still, you know, my husband has always supported the writers of the day and the new ideas; he has spent two hundred thousand francs for the publication of the 'Encyclopædia'; he has given pensions to the wits; he had a philosopher as preceptor to our sons."

These words renewed her sorrow. I knew enough, and I saw that neglect, ingratitude, and impiety had left desolate the house of my unhappy brother. All that I learned by the conversation of my sister-in-law and by the public voice filled me with consternation. The Baron de Pont was, in fact, one of the most intimate members of those infamous coteries of the Palais Royal, whence came forth every day calumnies and libels which every day attacked our chaste Queen and our young and virtuous King. Edmond lent his pen to this wickedness, which was worthy of hell, which perhaps before long would cause to break out amongst the deceived people a bloody rebellion against the royal authority. The signs which are precursors of the storm are muttering around us; prepared by the financial disasters, it will be consummated by philosophical writings. As for me, I shall not see them; my life is near its close. My infirmities warn me to prepare to leave the earth, and render an account to God of so many graces, and so many

long years of existence, which he has granted me. But if I had not faith in the aid of Providence, I would die bringing with me to the grave the most lively anxiety as to the fate of my dear ones, whom I am going to leave in the midst of the storm.



XV.

THE PONTOON-MAN OF EBLE.

THE earliest recollections which my memory retains are the following : my mother holding me by the hand, and leading me through the streets of Paris, which were full of people, men in red coats and caps, women in short gowns, wearing on their heads large tricolored cockades. My mother was very pale, and, without knowing why, I was very much afraid. We arrived before a vast building, and we stopped at an arched iron gate. Other persons were waiting like ourselves, and we could hear in the streets the voices of newsboys crying : " Buy ! buy ! here is the list of the condemned."

The great door suddenly opened with a loud noise ; a heavy vehicle rolled under the arch, and passed before us. . . . It was a large cart, on which stood some men bareheaded, their hair shaved, and their hands bound behind their back, and women also bound, and pressed close against each other. Gendarmes and soldiers guarded the carriage. My mother took me in her arms, held me up, and said in a loud voice :

" My child, say farewell to your father, who is going to die."

I looked, and saw on the cart a man who was leaning towards us, and whose face I recognized.

"Farewell!" cried he. "Farewell, wife! farewell, my child!"

He could say no more, the cart went on. . . . My mother's arms unclasped, she had fainted. . . . No one took any heed of us; she sat on a stone, pale and exhausted; and, when the crowd had dispersed, she made a final effort, and regained our lodging, dragging herself along by the houses, supporting herself against the walls. She did not speak; but I remember that she became very red, and her eyes shone with a strange light. We thus reached our poor room on the fifth floor, Rue Culture-Sainte-Catherine. There my mother fell into a chair, like a person overcome with fatigue; and the day passed, and the hours of the night slipped by, and still she did not awake from the stupor into which she had fallen. I dared not speak nor stir. I thought my mother was asleep, and I was half dead with fear, fatigue, and hunger. Towards the middle of the next day a neighbor, who sometimes rendered some services to my mother, knocked at our door; I opened it softly, making her a sign to make no noise. She approached, looked at my mother, took her hand, and said:

"My poor child, your mamma is very sick!"

The day passed thus; the good neighbor did not leave us; she made some tisane, but she dared not call in a physician.

"One does not know whom to trust," said she to me. "Your mamma has been rich, perhaps noble; that would be seen at once, and the doctor would perhaps send her to prison. . . . There are so many bad people around us. . . ."

My mother seemed to be dying ; she recognized me, but she could not speak. Towards morning she made an effort, and said to our neighbor :

"Go and bring Mr. Bluteau to me, he lives at the entresol;* . . . tell him that the Widow Duchaisne would like to speak to him."

The neighbor obeyed ; she soon returned, followed by an old man with white hair, very poorly clad. My mother clasped her hands on seeing him, and made him approach the bed ; the neighbor withdrew. I saw that my mother spoke in a low voice to Mr. Bluteau, that he listened attentively with a gentle and recollected air. She finished ; he said a few words, raised his right hand, and made the sign of the cross. . . . My mother's face seemed peaceful and radiant ; she called me, put my hand in that of the old man, and said :

"Father, I recommend this orphan to you."

I saw her fall back on her pillow, and become paler. . . . I do not very well know what happened ; the old man took me with him into a very poor little room, where he lived alone. He treated me with much kindness, and I soon loved him tenderly, and cared for no one else. Mr. Bluteau received no one ; but he often went out, and I remarked that before going he knelt down and said a short prayer ; on returning, he would clasp me in his arms, saying :

"Let us thank God, my dear child ; he has saved me once more. . . ."

I understood nothing of all this ; but I prayed to God, as my benefactor bade me do. Three years

* Lobby or small room between two stories.

passed thus ; I was then nine or ten years old, and I began to understand my position and that of the good old man who took such fatherly care of me. Mr. Bluteau was a priest ; he had been pastor of one of the finest parishes in Paris, and, not wishing to abandon his flock in the midst of the storm, he had hidden himself, under a disguise, and at the peril of his life, which was risked many times in a day ; he used to go and celebrate Mass in the cellars, penetrate into the hospitals, and even into the prisons ; he confessed the dying and those condemned ; and, in spite of his advanced age, he daily multiplied the prodigies of his charity and good works. My mother had known him in better days ; she had seen him again, when, stripped of her goods, fearing for my father's life, she had reached the depth of misfortune ; she had called him in at her last moment, and to this venerable priest she owed the only consolation which she could receive here below : the final absolution and the hope that I should not be forsaken.

Mr. Bluteau instructed while he conversed with me ; and, when I had reached my eleventh year, he sometimes allowed me to accompany him in his apostolic visits, now less dangerous than when the guillotine arose in Paris, but which must still be accompanied with prudence and with secrecy. I remember one evening a woman covered with rags came to seek him, and said to him in a low voice a word which made him shudder. He immediately prepared to go out, and I begged him to let me go with him.

"Come !" said he, "my child, and pray to God for the young patient whom we are going to see."

We set out, guided by the woman, who led us through one of the darkest streets adjoining the *Palais de Justice*; she brought us across a muddy alley and up a staircase, which seemed endless to me; arrived at the top story, she opened a door, and introduced us into a kind of garret, where, on a miserable bed, lay a man who seemed very near death. The face of this man had a fearful expression; the blood which he had lost in a violent hæmorrhage had saturated his clothes, his arms, and his chest, and he pushed from him, with a feeble but furious hand, the blood-stained clothes, repeating:

"Take away that blood, take it away! There is enough of it; there is enough of it! . . ."

At sight of us an old woman, who sat beside the bed, arose, approached the sick man, and said to him aloud;

"Here is the citizen-priest. . . ."

At these words, the sick man's face showed inexpressible terror and grief.

"What use is it?" cried he; "there is no mercy for me!"

"My friend, the mercy of God makes no exception," answered Mr. Bluteau.

"But I—I! who killed more than sixty priests at the Carmes."

"Well, my son," answered my benefactor, "thank God, who has saved one to absolve you!"*

I do not know what effect these words produced on the unhappy man; he softened, and tears gushed from his eyes; he allowed Mr. Bluteau to take

* Historical.

him by the hand ; and we went into an adjoining room. In the evening he said to me :

"That unhappy man died in peace ! let us bless the Lord !" He thought for a moment, and resumed :

"The same hand which has just absolved that murderer absolved the Queen Marie Antoinette ; the same hand has broken for the assassin of September and for the daughter of the Caesars the sacred bread of the Eucharist ; . . . O eternal Mercy ! how ineffable are thy decrees."

I was still a child, but the name of Marie Antoinette, which I had so often heard repeated, awoke my curiosity.

"You have seen the Queen, father ?" said I.

"Yès, my child," answered he ; "and, although you are only a child, I will relate it to you, so that one day, when I shall be dead, you can give testimony to the Christian sentiments which animated that much calumniated Queen. Remember what I am going to tell you, my dear child. The Queen was about to be tried, and the issue of her trial was very doubtful ; no one was admitted to see her ; she was suffering alone in the depth of her prison, when three holy ladies, Sister Jeanne, Sister Julia, Daughters of Charity, and Miss Foucher, the companion of their good works, obtained from the wife of the turnkey access to her cell. The Queen only asked them for one thing—a priest.

"Miss Foucher came to seek me, and asked me if I would risk my life to bring to Marie Antoinette the aids of religion. I accepted with pleasure that sacred duty, and I was introduced into the presence of the royal captive. She made her confession ; I

gave her communion with the Sacred Host which I had brought in my watch; I saw, my dear child, tears of joy roll down the pale, emaciated cheeks of the poor Queen, the poor widow, the poor mother. . . . The eve of the day on which she was led to the scaffold, thanks to the good Miss Foucher, I was enabled to celebrate Holy Mass in the Queen's apartment; she again received communion, and was fortified, by the reception of the Most Holy Victim, against the terrors of death. . . . This, my son, is a recollection which is my glory and consolation; remember what I have said, so that, if one day Marie Antoinette is blamed in your presence, you can defend her, and attest that she died with as much courage as faith, with as much piety as meekness. . . ."

My benefactor could say no more; tears choked his speech, and the recollection of the Queen always made them flow abundantly. I have written this short account, as being one of the things that most struck me in the course of my life. . . . I have but little to relate of myself; I have lived obscure and alone; I have lived more in the life of others than in my own, and the thoughts, the words which impressed me in my childhood come back again in my old age, and keep me company in my solitude.

I had reached my thirteenth year, when I had the misfortune of losing my benefactor, my second father. He died almost suddenly, after a day of excessive fatigue. A severe attack of pneumonia

* It is well known that the Queen received Communion several times in her prison, from the hands of Mr. Maguire, pastor of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois. Except the name of Mr. Blateau, everything in our story is historic.

carried him off in a few hours. Before he died, he made me approach, and showed me a little box that was under the bed, and said to me :

"My dear child, that box with what it contains is yours ; may the Lord preserve you, my dear son ! . . . Remember him, and he will remember you. . . . Farewell, Pierre," . . .

My dear father died a quarter of an hour after he had spoken to me ; he died ca'm and joyous, as if he had a glimpse of heaven. I remained alone. . . . I have sometimes seen young trees rooted up by the storm, and cast without support on the ground, and I have thought that their fate resembled mine. . . .

My benefactor was buried without pomp and without prayer. The remains of this just man, of this holy and virtuous priest, were thrown into a corner of the cemetery of Sainte-Marguerite, where also rests the body of the little Dauphin, who recently died in the Temple. I followed the hearse alone, and I returned alone to the deserted room, of which the proprietor allowed me possession for a week. There I tried to recollect myself, and to think of what I should do ; I scarcely knew what my origin was ; my benefactor had only told me that my parents had died during the Revolution, and that I had neither friends nor fortune. . . . I knew nothing more. I took the box which Mr. Bluteau had shown me ; I found in it a large roll of parchments and papers which seemed very old, and the writing of which I could not read, a little jewel-case containing a wedding-ring, and a folded paper, on which were these words, "For Pierre Duchaisne," written in my benefactor's hand :

"These, my dear child, are all the particulars which I can give you regarding your family. I have known it for a long time; it was to your grand-uncle, Antoine Duchaisne, the notary, that I owed the benefits of education. He had seen me when only a child, and finding in me some inclination for study, he defrayed the expenses of my instruction, and to him I owe the happiness of being admitted to the priesthood. I knew his brother, the farmer-general, your grandfather, who, in consequence of family misfortunes, died overcome by infirmities of mind and body. You are his grandson, the son of Edmund Duchaisne and Léonide Villedieu. Your poor father was imbued with the philosophical ideas; but God permitted that a Christian wife should open his eyes, and that misfortune should finish the purification of his soul. The Revolution stripped him of his wealth; his former connection with the unfortunate Duke d'Orleans caused him to be suspected; he was arrested, brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal and condemned to death. One of my worthy brethren, who was in the same prison as your father, but who survived him, assured me that he prepared himself for death by the most Christian sentiment.

"Your excellent mother, whom I attended in her last moments, died the death of the just. Your aunt, Madame the Baroness de Pons, died in prison, and, doubtless, the mercy of God visited her in her last hours.

"The two daughters of your grand-uncle, Antoine, were married in the provinces. One of them died without leaving any children, the other emi-

grated to Spain, and I have found it impossible to get any tidings of her. You are, therefore, my dear child, alone on the earth; but God is your father and protector, and I venture to hope that the Divine Goodness will permit me to see you grow up to man's estate. . . . If not, my child, trust in Providence, and do not be ashamed to work. . . . Man is born to labor, as the bird to fly. . . . Serve God in whatever position you may be; serve your country, love your brethren, and do as much good as you can.

"I place in this box with this paper a roll of parchment, saved by your mother when they were about to put the seals on her effects, the certificate of your birth, and your mother's wedding-ring, which was the only piece of jewelry she possessed when dying. Whatever becomes of us, my dear son, remember your adopted father, and pray to God for him.

"XAVIER BLUTEAU.

"Paris, the 24th of February of the year 1799."

I read this paper weeping; then I began to pray to God and to reflect. I saw very well that I had no help to expect from any one; no one was interested in me; the institutions of charity, so numerous now, either existed no longer or had not yet arisen from their ruins. I might perhaps have solicited the charity of some of those to whom Mr. Bluteau had rendered services, and whose names I knew, but I did not venture to seek them, and finding myself tall and strong, I thought I could earn a living for myself. I had no great choice; and following the natural bent of the times in which

I lived, I went to the nearest barrack and enlisted as a fifer. I concealed my papers in my clothes, I hung my mother's ring and Mr. Bluteau's little silver cross around my neck, and, after having bid farewell to the last resting-place of my dear benefactor, I set out for the regiment to which I was assigned.

It was thus I became a soldier. I did my duty, but, although I was neither more cowardly nor more stupid than another, I did not rise from the obscure ranks of the army, and thus I made all the campaigns of the consulate and of the empire, undergoing many fatigues, braving many dangers, for a work which we thought then would be immortal. I had many happy years, and, although I was confounded with the crowd, I felt the ardor of battle as well as the commander-in-chief or the marshal whose voice rang through our squadrons. I was young; the wandering and exciting life of camps pleased me, and I faced death without fear when it came in the shadow of the flag. I will not relate anything of our wars . . . to what purpose would it be? They are written in the memory of every one. I will not say that I was brave—where is the use? All were brave. I will not complain of having been forgotten—why should I? Others more worthy than I have remained forgotten in the crowd. One service alone deserved some reward, but in the midst of public disasters it was natural that this service should remain without glory or honor.

It was during the fatal retreat of 1812. The army was marching to the Bérézina, and neither the emperor nor his generals knew where to cross the river.

It was decided to throw out a bridge which would permit the passage to be made. I was serving in a company of pontoon-men. General Eblé, our commander, amidst the greatest misfortunes, in the disorder in which the army had been since the evacuation of Moscow, had succeeded in saving his travelling-forges, tools, coal, and had even made us forge cramp-irons from the wheels of deserted carriages. This wise precaution was the salvation of the army. We descended the heights which overlook the Bérézina; we saw before us the river, whose troubled waves were covered with drifting snow-flakes; this was the field of battle where we must either conquer or die, for the safety of our comrades-in-arms and our emperor.

During the night of the 25th and 26th of November I went down with my companions into the bed of the river. I planted the first stake in the mud where our feet could not rest securely. The force of the waves had washed away the ford; plunging into the water up to the mouth, benumbed with cold, blinded by the snow-flakes which a fierce wind was blowing in our faces, it required a superhuman effort for us to continue our work. There was neither moon nor stars in the sky; we had light only from the enemy's camp-fires; one of my comrades died from cold beside me, two others were carried away by the blocks of ice; but we had no time to mourn the dead. . . .

When day broke the trestles of the bridge were half placed, and, by a miracle of Providence, the Russian army fell back. Napoleon's star was still shining on that day.

For two days we continued our work, without

taking any rest ; the Emperor sent us words of encouragement. General Eblé was in the water like ourselves : he consoled us, he promised us each a pension of a thousand francs and the Cross of the Legion of Honor. . . . I know not if my companions thought as I did, but it seemed to me that neither money, nor even the star which shines on the breast of our kings, could recompense our efforts nor repay our sufferings. . . . It required something more : there is a God above us. . . . Often, during those terrible hours, I pressed to my breast my benefactor's cross. . . . The Cross on which the Son of God died for men encouraged me still more than the Cross of the Legion of Honor.

At last, on the 28th of November, the two bridges were finished, and the army, crowding on the river banks, began to cross with indescribable tumult and disorder. Three times the bridge made of carriages broke, three times we mended it ; but finding ourselves again together at work, and counting each other, we were struck with pity and with terror. Out of forty-two pontoon-men who had gone into the water to lay the bridge, twenty-eight had given way to the cold, or had been carried away by the floating ice. There were fourteen of us like ghosts ; but our hearts remained whole. The army passed ; after it came a tumultuous crowd of stragglers, who, having been dispersed in the neighboring woods and surrounding villages, at sound of the departing army rushed thither all at once. Their immense and confused mass filled to overflowing the narrow entrance to the bridges. Crushed, trodden under foot, thrown into the water, these unfortunate

people uttered cries of agony ; and the disorder became still greater when the Emperor came in his turn to cross the bridge. Force had to be used to clear a way for him ; surrounded by the Grenadiers of the Guard, he passed before me over that bridge which my companions had sealed with their blood, and bearing with him, as we thought, the hope and the salvation of France.

Minutes became more precious than hours. The Russian cannons were heard from the heights. Marshal Victor, with six thousand men, was defending alone, on the banks of that cursed river, the great retreating army, which in its despair and anguish was like to that multitude which will one day fill the Valley of Judgment. Fifty thousand stragglers, sick or wounded, an immense mass of luggage, still more embarrassed the march. For more than two days the cold and misery were such that the vanguard had lost a third of its number, most of them young. The bullets, falling in the midst of this confusion, drove these unfortunates to the last depths of despair. The strongest and most solid men passed on ; some, with sword in hand, opened for themselves a passage ; others attempted to scale the sides of the bridge, and fell into the water, which carried them off. . . . The artillery bridge, being overcrowded, gave way and broke ; the live column which was on this narrow passage attempted to go back. They could not, and, pushed by the crowd from behind, it fell into the gulf, where those who followed them were precipitated in their turn.

A single bridge remained ; it was besieged. . . . Oh ! what hours. A furious storm arose and over-

took that mass of men, who were descending the heights to rush toward the only path of safety. The noise of the cannon mingled with the howling of the tempest, and at times arose a sound formed of many voices, a chorus of lamentation and blasphemy, which was heard above the tumult of the storm. The more fortunate gained the bridge, but by passing over heaps of wounded, of half-stifled women and children. The stronger overthrew the weaker, who fell into the water, without any one turning their heads to look after them, or even conceiving the thought of pitying them. Every one thought only of himself; every one wished only to live, and see France once more. Towards nine o'clock in the evening the distress increased; Victor's battalions began their march, and opened a bloody breach through the midst of the unfortunates, whom they had hitherto defended. They crossed the bridge, overthrowing all that opposed their passage. A numerous rear-guard still remained on the bank, with their baggage and carriages, and not having chosen to profit by that last night of safety. Day brought them all at once before the bridge. . . . My companions and I had just crossed it; the Russians were about to avail themselves of it to pursue us. Then General Eblé made us light torches of straw which he had prepared, and by his orders we set fire to the bridge. It was rapidly consumed, and the smoking remains of it fell into the river just when the Russians were descending the heights and making ready to cross it. Several thousand stragglers remained abandoned on the hostile shore. We saw them wandering on the banks of the Bérésina, holding out their

hands to us. Some threw themselves into the water, others trusted themselves on icebergs; others again, crazed with despair, rushed headlong into the flames. The rest remained in the hands of the Russians.

I have seen many battles, but never anything so frightful as that last night. Full of distress at the recollection of my comrades, my brothers, who died at my side, I could scarcely thank Providence, who had saved me. I dragged myself along, sick and with feet half frozen, with what had once been my battalion, till we came to Wilna, where General Eblé made me enter a hospital, renewing all the promises which he had made to us in the Emperor's name. I had become insensible to everything; cold, hunger, misery, alone made themselves felt, and I thought myself at the end of all my woes when I found myself on a bed of straw, having for nourishment a little bread soaked in water. The departure, or rather the flight, of the army did not concern me; I, however, remained a prisoner in the hands of the Russians, but I had become indifferent to the future, and anxious only about the present moment and present wants. . . . For three years I remained at Wilna, sick, and a prisoner; at the end of that time I was sent home, and I begged my way to the frontiers of France. This was a great joy to me, and I thought I would die when I knelt to kiss the ground of my dear country.

All was changed: the Emperor sailing away over the Atlantic Ocean; the marshals, generals, the men of the Empire, were nothing now. I knew not to whom to address myself to obtain, if not the

promised pension, at least some aid which might assist me to get cured, and to wait for better days. General Eblé was dead; and, although in the office of the Minister of War I met, every day, men whose lives the poor pontoon-men had saved, I was always repulsed, and I received neither back-pay, nor travelling expenses, nor pension, nor crosses of honor. There yet remained to me a little money, which I had once entrusted to an honest man among my friends. He returned it to me. I came into a suburb of the town of —; I rented a little house and a small piece of land; I bought some old furniture and some tools, and I became a gardener. The first years were hard and miserable, but I consoled myself by remembering my sufferings in Russia. I became accustomed to my trade, and I succeeded in gardening quite easily. . . .

I remained alone. . . . If I am to believe some accounts in the old papers which my mother saved, I am descended from an ancient family, which has in its time been rich and held honorable offices. In me it has come back to the people; and it will end with me.

Poor, infirm, obscure, I will associate no one with my lot. I do not complain, but I remember that at the Bérézina I gave to those who have repulsed me the gift of my life. . . . God preserved it; and, although it be but a poor offering, it shall henceforth belong to him alone. Retired in my little house, poor but peaceful, I say to myself with joy that I have no more concern with men, and that I depend on God alone.

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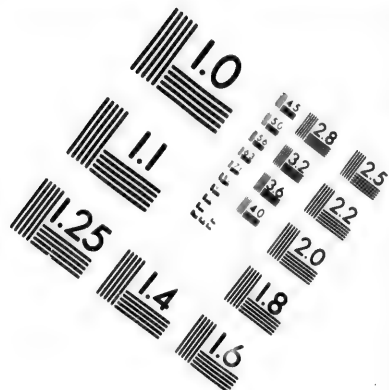
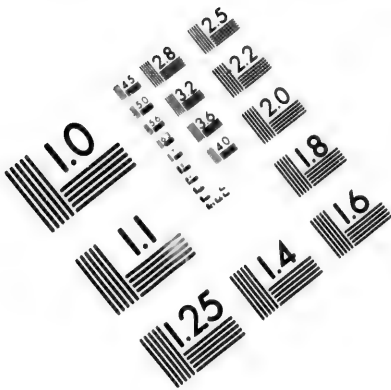
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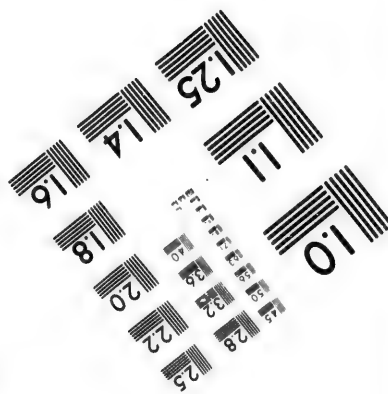
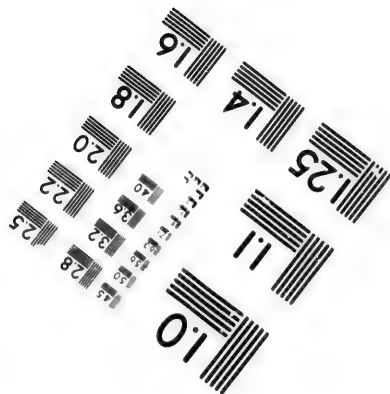
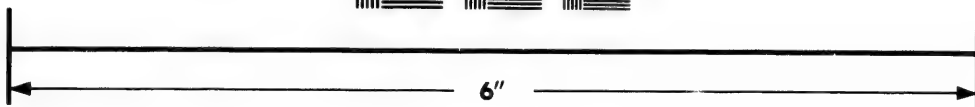
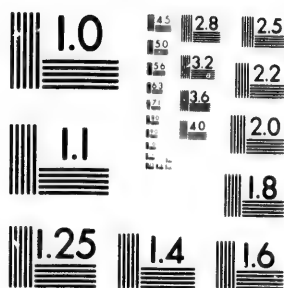
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